

Research on Humanistic Care in Psychiatric Nursing

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Abstract: Humanistic care in psychiatric nursing represents an essential evolution beyond traditional medical models, emphasizing the integration of compassionate understanding with evidence-based practice. This study examines the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and innovative pathways for implementing humanistic care in psychiatric nursing settings. The research identifies that therapeutic communication and narrative approaches significantly enhance nurse-patient relationships and treatment outcomes. However, current implementations face multiple challenges, including systemic barriers, cultural disparities, and resource limitations. Drawing on multidisciplinary research and clinical cases, this paper proposes a comprehensive framework for humanistic care comprising emotional management, environmental optimization, and social integration. The “psychodrama” approach emerges as an effective intervention for facilitating emotional expression and self-worth reconstruction among patients with mental health conditions. Furthermore, spiritual care components serve as crucial elements for addressing patients’ existential needs and promoting holistic healing.

Keywords: Humanistic care; Psychiatric nursing; Therapeutic communication; Narrative nursing; Psychodrama

1. Introduction

In contemporary mental healthcare, humanistic care has emerged as a transformative approach that complements biological psychiatry with personalized, dignity-preserving interventions. The integration of humanistic principles into psychiatric nursing represents a crucial pathway for implementing patient-centered care and enhancing therapeutic outcomes. This study aims to systematically examine the theoretical foundations, practical challenges, and innovative strategies for humanistic care in psychiatric nursing. By synthesizing empirical evidence from various clinical settings and international experiences, it seeks to establish a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing humanistic practices. The findings are expected to contribute to the ongoing transformation of mental healthcare and provide practical guidance for nurses and healthcare administrators^[1].

2. Theoretical Foundations and Core Concepts of Humanistic Care in Psychiatric Nursing

2.1 Theoretical Framework of Humanistic Care

From a nursing perspective, humanistic care aligns with Watson’s theory of human caring, which emphasizes that nurses must possess knowledge of human sciences to provide personalized care. This theoretical approach maintains that effective care requires maintaining belief in each person, respecting individuality, truly understanding clinical situations, and “being with” patients through meaningful presence. The core of this perspective recognizes that nursing extends beyond technical tasks to encompass authentic human connections. From a psychological standpoint, humanistic care reflects the evolution from behaviorist approaches to humanistic psychology that emphasizes personal agency, self-actualization, and holistic development. This transition emphasizes patient-centered approaches, emotional support, and strengths-based perspectives, ultimately enhancing therapeutic effectiveness and personal growth. Furthermore, social theories highlight the importance of addressing structural barriers and cultural factors that impact mental health recovery, which are essential for both individual wellbeing and social inclusion^[2].

2.2 Core Principles of Humanistic Psychiatric Nursing

Humanistic care in psychiatric nursing generates significant value through multiple core principles. In terms of therapeutic relationship building, this approach facilitates deep connection through genuine presence, empathetic understanding, and unconditional positive regard. These relational qualities enable the development of trust and collaboration, which are essential foundations for therapeutic progress. For environmental healing, the establishment of humanistic care principles helps create therapeutic spaces that promote safety, dignity, and autonomy. As evidenced by practices in various psychiatric settings, the integration of environmental considerations with humanistic elements creates a more conducive atmosphere for recovery. Moreover, from an empowerment perspective, humanistic nursing cultivates patient agency and self-determination, thereby better supporting personal recovery journeys and community reintegration.

Table 1: Core Principles of Humanistic Care in Psychiatric Nursing

Principle Category	Core Elements	Practical Manifestations
Relational Principles	Empathetic connection, authentic presence, unconditional acceptance	Active listening, non-judgmental attitude, emotional support
Environmental Principles	Safety promotion, dignity preservation, autonomy support	Therapeutic milieu, personalized spaces, meaningful activities
Empowerment Principles	Strengths-based approach, collaborative partnership, self-determination	Shared decision-making, goal setting, skill development
Holistic Principles	Biopsychosocial-spiritual consideration, individualized care, cultural sensitivity	Comprehensive assessment, personalized interventions, cultural adaptation

3. Practical Applications of Humanistic Care in Psychiatric Nursing

3.1 Therapeutic Communication and Narrative Approaches

A significant advancement in humanistic psychiatric nursing lies in the implementation of therapeutic communication and narrative approaches. These methods prioritize understanding the patient's subjective experience and personal meaning over mere symptom management. The narrative nursing training programs implemented in various psychiatric settings demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating personal stories with clinical understanding, creating a synergistic effect that enhances both assessment and intervention. The "psychodrama" approach represents an important innovation in therapeutic modality. By employing dramatic expression and role-playing, this method provides an ideal platform for the deep exploration of emotional concerns and interpersonal patterns. As demonstrated by the clinical case from the psychological ward, which incorporates collective script creation, role-playing, and emotional enactment, this approach creates a synergistic effect that enhances both emotional expression and cognitive restructuring. Additionally, psychodrama activates patients' self-healing capacity and significantly deepens nurse-patient trust and collaboration.

3.2 Humanistic Environment Creation and Activity-Based Interventions

Humanistic environment creation and activity-based interventions play a vital role in promoting therapeutic progress and personal recovery. A supportive environment can create an enabling atmosphere for the integration of clinical care with psychosocial rehabilitation, facilitating the recovery of self-esteem and social functioning. The environmental initiatives implemented in various psychiatric settings, including comfortable ward designs, personalized spaces, and meaningful recreational activities, demonstrate how environmental elements can be leveraged to promote the deep integration of humanistic principles with psychiatric treatment^[3].

3.3 Spiritual Care and Cultural Adaptation

Spiritual care represents a crucial dimension for addressing existential needs and promoting holistic healing in psychiatric nursing. The qualitative research conducted in Denmark demonstrates that nurses view spiritual care as an essential component of holistic practice, though they find it challenging to define precisely. These nurses emphasize empathy and connection when responding to patient suffering and frequently integrate patient values and beliefs into the care process. Cultural adaptation in humanistic psychiatric nursing requires careful consideration of diverse belief systems, values, and communication styles. The ethnographic study conducted in Iran revealed significant barriers arising from religious beliefs, language differences, and cultural norms. For instance, patients with religious delusions might refuse contact with nurses of the opposite gender, and language barriers could affect diagnostic understanding. These findings highlight the necessity for psychiatric nurses to develop cultural competence and adapt interventions to align with patients' cultural backgrounds while maintaining therapeutic integrity^[4].

4. Conclusion

Humanistic care in psychiatric nursing represents a paradigm shift that requires comprehensive consideration of theoretical foundations, practical challenges, and innovative pathways. This study has highlighted the importance of therapeutic communication, environmental optimization, cultural competence, and systemic support in promoting the deep integration of humanistic principles with psychiatric practice. The findings underscore that effective implementation can significantly enhance the quality of mental healthcare and patient outcomes. The transformation of psychiatric nursing models should be grounded in the principles of personhood, dignity, and holistic healing. The humanistic care approach, with its integration of evidence-based practice and personalized understanding, provides an effective framework for therapeutic progress. Meanwhile, comprehensive educational preparation offers a powerful tool for breaking down implementation barriers and enabling quality care. Furthermore, the construction of therapeutic environments and the development of supportive organizational cultures create necessary conditions for the deep integration of humanistic values with clinical practice. Looking forward, humanistic care in psychiatric nursing should continue to evolve in response to changing societal needs, evidence-based advancements, and healthcare reforms. Future developments may include deeper integration of technology in therapeutic practices, more sophisticated understanding of cultural dimensions, and innovative mechanisms for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Through continuous innovation and refinement, humanistic care can fulfill its potential as a crucial approach to cultivating recovery-oriented mental health services that honor both professional excellence and human dignity.

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