

RESEARCH: QUALITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSING

In June 1995 the Psychiatric Nursing Lecturers of the Department of Nursing, University of the North West, Mmabatho organised a psychiatric nursing conference. The theme of this was Quality Psychiatric Nursing and a number of papers were presented. This issue of CURATIONIS publishes papers by POGGENPOEL and KGOSIDINTSI.

PSYCHIATRIC NURSING RESEARCH BASED ON NURSING FOR THE WHOLE PERSON THEORY

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ABSTRACT

One of the determinants for decision-making in conducting psychiatric nursing research is the researchers' framework of reference he/she works from. This framework of reference refers to the way in which researcher views reality and is called a paradigm and consists of metatheoretical, theoretical and methodological assumptions. The metatheoretical assumptions reflect the researcher's view of a person, health, nursing and environment. These are beliefs and cannot be tested and are accepted to be true for the researcher. The theoretical assumptions are deducted from the metatheoretical assumptions and can be formulated into central statements or hypothesis and be validated through research. Nursing for the Whole Person Theory has a set of metatheoretical, theoretical and methodological assumptions that can provide direction in conducting psychiatric nursing research. In this paper the application of Nursing for the Whole Person Theory in conducting psychiatric nursing research will be demonstrated by using a completed psychiatric nursing research study as an example.

This paper addresses psychiatric nursing research which can be based on Nursing for the Whole Person Theory (Oral Roberts University, Anna Vaughn School of Nursing, 1990: 136-142; Rand Afrikaans University, Department of Nursing Science, 1992: 7-9). Throughout this paper I shall try to answer three questions:

- Why should psychiatric nursing research and practice be based on a nursing theory?
- Why choose Nursing for the Whole Person Theory as basis for further research?
- How can Nursing for the Whole Person Theory be utilised in conducting psychiatric nursing research?

WHY SHOULD PSYCHIATRIC NURSING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE BE BASED ON A NURSING THEORY?

Psychiatric nursing is one of several disciplines within nursing. Since the 1960s

there has been an increasing debate in nursing circles in favour of utilising nursing theory as the basis for practising nursing science. The reason is that nursing science is an applied human clinical science that utilises basic sciences such as sociology, psychology, anatomy, physiology and microbiology in providing quality nursing care.

Nursing theories state the four important concepts in nursing that makes it a unique science, namely: person, health, nursing and environment as well as the interrelationships between these concepts. Data from the basic sciences is utilised within the nursing theory conceptual framework. This provides for a shift away from a focus on medicine and cure to one that is concerned with health and care (Phillips, 1995: 4).

Nursing and nursing theory are concerned with health and care. Persons receiving health care have become disenchanted with the medical emphasis on disease, illness and cure. Little attention has been given to the other dimensions that is indispensable to life.

Phillips (1995: 4-5) argues that nurse researchers should quest for knowledge about the whole person. Nursing care should not only focus on a person's physical aspects but also on the psychological aspects, spiritual aspects and social aspects. Nurse researchers must focus on health promotion that encompasses care and doing with the person rather than cure and doing to the person. Nurse researchers have the opportunity to provide new theory and empirical guidelines for nursing practice so that quality care can be given to all persons. Phillip's (1995: 405) plea for research that focuses on health promotion, whole persons and active participation of people in promoting their health is supported by South Africa's new health policy. Nurse researchers utilising nursing theory as a frame of reference are enabled to conduct research that will be significant in promoting quality health care.

WHY CHOOSE NURSING FOR THE WHOLE PERSON THEORY AS BASIS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH?

Phillips (1995:4) challenges nurse researchers to investigate the efficacy of nursing models in providing advanced knowledge for nursing practice. He asks the question: "Do some of the nursing models still provide for knowledge and practice from a totality paradigm view of people, with an eye toward prevention and cure only?"

In a sense this question provides the basis for motivating the choice of Nursing for the Whole Person Theory as the framework for conducting psychiatric nursing research. Further aspects strengthening the motivation include the following:

- Nursing for the Whole Person Theory is an umbrella theory. All the disciplines in nursing can be accommodated in this theory. It provides the flexibility to integrate different biological, social, psychological anatomical and educational theories and models to present a comprehensive approach to man within his environment in order to promote health.
- Nursing for the Whole Person Theory addresses a person as a whole, consisting of multiple interacting dimensions.
- The focus is on health as a process and not as an end product.

- Nursing is viewed as a goal-directed service. Nursing actions are those of assisting and facilitating a patient's (individual, family, community) mobilisation of resources. The patient is an active participant in the health promotion process.
- An individual is viewed as part of a family and part of a community.

When working with Nursing for the Whole Person Theory as frame of reference it always amazes me how flexible the theory is for conducting research, and also how it gives structural coherence to the entire research process.

REFERENCE

PHILLIPS, JR (1995): Nursing Theory Based Research for Advanced Nursing Practice. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 8(1): 4-5

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