

Learning to Care for a Psychiatric Patient

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Going into this module I am honestly afraid to work with psychiatric patients. I think this is mostly due to the fact that I have never truly dealt with someone that has a psychiatric illness. The only reference I have to go off of is what I have seen on television and we all know how television exaggerates things. I feel that people with psychiatric disorders would be unpredictable and not easily helped which is frightening. Three words I would use to describe my expectations being on a psychiatric unit would be, chaos, hostility, and even frustration.

In other areas of nursing care like the medical surgical unit of the hospital the patients have physical ailments that can be treated with medications as well as many other treatment options. These patients are usually able to recover from their illness and carry on with their lives. This isn't the case though for psychiatric patients. The psychiatric illness that they're suffering from isn't something that will ever go away it isn't curable. There are medications that these patients can take to help with the symptoms of their illness but there isn't a cure for them. I would imagine that this would cause the patient some degree of frustration, knowing that they will never live what others would call a normal life. Not being able to fix this for these patients would cause me some frustration seeing someone suffering and not being able to offer them a long-term fix for it.

I picture patients with uncontrolled schizophrenic disorder or bipolar disorder that causes them to have violent emotional outbursts and hostility to those around them. This causes me to think that I could possibly be physically assaulted by a patient. Their irrational behavior and the inability to control one's urges makes me fear for my safety. If they are suffering from psychiatric illness, are they going to want to harm me because someone in their head told them to? Is there going to be times where there is a group of us having to hold a patient down in order to give them an injection to calm them down? As I'm writing this, I know I'm writing about a

dramatic scene I've seen in multiple movies and that it is based on my ignorance rather than what I should actually expect.

The frustration these patients feel because of the situation they are in along with their irrational and sometimes hostile behavior this could only lead to a chaotic environment. I do better in an organized and structured environment, and I don't feel like that is what I will walk into on a psychiatric unit. I feel I would hear a lot of yelling, see a lot of manic behaviors and people who are unable to control themselves and their actions. The chaos that this would cause would make me feel anxious and like I was in an out-of-control environment that would never be calm.

With all of that being said there are three questions that I would like to have answered while going through this course. "How many people suffering from mental illness have their symptoms under control with medications and other therapy compared to the number of patients that can't get their symptoms under control due to noncompliance?" "What is the most appropriate way to interact with these patients without making myself vulnerable or causing them further distress?" "How much of psychiatric illness is caused by traumatic events compared to a genetic or biological cause?"

I most look forward to learning what the reality of working with psychiatric patients is rather than basing it off of my lack of knowledge. I am excited to learn how to interact with these patients and to be able to carry this knowledge with me into the world so that I can educate family and friends on it as well as be able to interact with someone who has a psychiatric illness without stereotypes and fears getting in the way and causing me make them to feel like they aren't even human just because of their illness.

