

Thoughts About Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing

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There are many feelings that I have surrounding mental health and mental health nursing. The words unfairness, stigma, and unimportant are what I often associate with mental health. I am thankful that we are getting the opportunity to be exposed to such diverse psychiatric illnesses and also able to do a simulation outside of the “real” clinical setting. I am a bit anxious about the potential to see patients with more complex mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or multiple personalities as I have had no previous experience in caring for such patients. I have only worked in the inpatient pharmacy in our small community hospital and have only been able to see just a few interactions between nurses and patients with mental health issues. During the small encounters that I did have, I was concerned that the nurses were not completely trained to deal with these types of patients. I could get a sense of fear and hopelessness as they saw these patients repeatedly being admitted and or seen in the emergency room. Often these patients weren't getting the follow-up care that they needed and this frustrated many of the nurses.

The only experiences I have had with mental health are those that have been seen in my own family. I have had several close relatives diagnosed with bipolar and one with schizophrenia. I was able to see the change in one of my cousins when she began to have depressive times and then have moments of impulsiveness and irritability. She would also have moments where she would do random things like wrap her feet in pampers, which was mind-boggling to me. At that moment in time, I was a young teenager and was never exposed to such individuals so it caught me by surprise and I was extremely worried about her. She was admitted multiple times to Mental Health facilities and was finally able to be properly medicated and is now completely off of medications and is living a beautiful and productive life. So I know the importance of proper attention and care for patients who have mental health issues. My other

cousin is still battling his diagnosis of schizophrenia and is still trying to find the proper medication regimen that will facilitate a better lifestyle. I will admit that when I am around him I am often scared of what he may or may not do as his actions are unpredictable.

The fear that I have surrounding mental health issues is the complexity of these disorders or illnesses. I know that assuming care in the clinical setting is much different when you are having day-to-day encounters as opposed to the only few encounters I had with family members. I am also intimidated by the strong personalities these individuals may have especially the ones that may have anger issues or be physically violent. As I have stated before I have a cousin with schizophrenia and he often has delusions where he believes someone is hurting him. That is honestly what frightens me the most. Nurses are held at higher accountability and if these patients truly believe that they are being harmed by the nurse how does she justify herself/himself?

That leads me to one of the first questions that I have, which I anticipate will be answered during this module. Will we learn how to handle critical emergent situations when patients become hostile? Also, will the medications we learn about regarding the different mental illnesses be those that are the most common? Will we be learning only about general illnesses or going into depth about certain or the top illnesses? Will we be also doing one on one care as we do in clinical in the previous modules or is this more of a get-your-feet-wet kind of experience?

I am sincerely excited yet scared of being able to learn a bit more about the nursing aspect of mental health and how we can impact this population. I am hoping that throughout this module I find myself growing more confident in being able to care for these patients as I know that no matter what field of nursing we go into we will have some kind of encounter with mental

health illness patients and knowing that we have background knowledge about mental health will make me a tad bit more at ease.