

Current Theories and Practice: Journaling Assignment

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Module 6: Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing

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Psychiatric mental health nursing is not an area that I specifically have a lot of experience in. I worked in the emergency room as a nursing assistant for around two years. As a county hospital, we accepted and cared for all patients that came through our door, whether they were experiencing physical or mental trauma, and whether they were insured or not. With this in mind, we saw a great number of patients experiencing psychiatric mental health issues, whether it be their primary reason for coming to the emergency room or if it was a secondary complication to their priority medical concern at the time. During my time there, I was able to see a variety of patients suffering with various types of mental illnesses, such as depression and suicidal ideation, schizophrenia, alcoholism and withdrawal, and anxiety. While I did not partake in the actual medical care for the patients, I was able to interact with these patients often to provide effective communication and establish trust with the patients in order to build a relationship that would allow them to let our nursing and medical staff take care of them. Without establishing this therapeutic relationship with the patient, it can be challenging for the nursing team to effectively perform assessments, administer medications, and simply talk with the patient with cooperation.

I am interested in learning more about the psychiatric and mental health illnesses that I will be encountering during my career as a nurse. My goal is either to become an emergency room or labor and delivery nurse. While these positions do not specialize in treating psychiatric and mental health disorders, I understand that these illnesses are very common and will be apparent in my unit as I care for my patient holistically. As I stated before, the emergency room nurse must care for a wide variety of patient types and illnesses, ranging from mental health issues to imminent life-threatening traumas, and everything in between. Therefore, it will be important for me as I become a nurse to be able to clearly understand what my patient is experiencing, what may be causing it, and how I can be of assistance to meet their care goals,

whether it be immediate treatment for a alcohol withdrawal or finding a facility or external resource to offer structure, guidance, and encouragement to someone battling a chronic mental disorder, such as depression or anxiety. As a labor and delivery nurse, my priority will be focused on providing comfort and encouragement to mothers as they are experiencing one of the most rewarding, yet challenging events of their life. In order to do this effectively, I need to understand different varieties of psychiatric and mental health illnesses. By understanding the pathology, symptoms, and risks associated with each illness, I will be able to provide comfort and guidance to mothers that may require additional support during their birth process. This is an important role because it will be my responsibility to care for these patients holistically which includes the mother's physical and mental health. As we have learned in lecture, increased stress and anxiety can actually slow the process of labor by releasing hormones that inhibit uterine contractions and placental blood flow. Anxiety can also affect the mother's ability to cope with pain, making the process that much more difficult and unbearable. Therefore, it is imperative for me, and all nursing students, to accurately understand the common psychiatric and mental health disorders that patients may be experiencing. We will all be caring for patients dealing with mental health problems, regardless of what type of speciality nurse you want to be.

My only concern for this portion of our module is that I will not know how to properly care for the patients that are specifically in these facilities for mental help. I am worried that I may say the wrong things when trying to help, or that I may not know what to say at all. I am hoping that our lectures and instructors will be able to give us some guidance on how to effectively communicate and interact with these patients.

During this module, I hope to learn about the various types of mental health illnesses. What are the most common mental health disorders currently? This will allow me to be able to

recognize the signs and symptoms associated with psychiatric disorders and what to assess for in my patients. How many patients actively experiencing these disorders are aware of their symptoms? Do they realize they may be suffering from a mental health issue or does it go unnoticed and undiagnosed for a while when they are battling challenges in their daily life? I am also expecting to get an understanding of the pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic methods used for treatment. What are the most common medications used and are they more effective than non-pharmacologic therapies such as aromatherapy, meditation, therapy sessions, and exercise. Although I do not want to specialize in psychiatric nursing, I believe that the educational content and clinical experiences will be very beneficial to my nursing career.