

Importance of Core Competencies Assessment Scales for Community Health Nurses in India

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The new age nursing profession is primarily based upon the efficient execution of the profession with skills and appropriate knowledge. The core competencies development is essential during and after the completion of formal education. The community nursing competencies are a bit more important as they enable the nurses to work independently as a practitioner. The regular evaluation of competencies helps to achieve the standard of health care services in the community setting.

Method: to present this review researcher reviewed almost 70 articles from different online platforms i.e. PubMed, Scopus, and Google scholar were screened and the final 16 were reviewed.

Conclusion: Community health nurses working in domiciliary care need immense exposure to develop core competencies for their practice field. A standardized guide for community health nurse core competencies needs to be based upon the indigenous needs/programs of India. This will help to infuse confidence and perfection among our community nurse practitioners. The evaluation scale will be another milestone to ensure the extent of core competencies development.

Keywords: Core competencies, nurses, community health, competencies assessment

Introduction

The context of health care has changed in recent years in India. Our country is attaining different landmarks in health care services, which has aroused the interest of policymakers and caterers to extend the best health care in society. Similarly, the scenario of community health also changed after the introduction of the National Health Mission in India. Now community people are aware of their health rights, they want better-updated care in every context. The best execution of health care services at the doorstep is possible if health personnel gain the required core competencies of community health services execution. These core competencies enable each provider to adjust and give care independently to individuals and families. Competent nurses can cater according to the changing needs of society.

Definition and features of community health nursing

Competency is a key to opening the lock of wisdom among learners. It is defined as the ability of individuals to make decisions and carry out the profession successfully. Community Core competencies are the vital abilities for nurses need to develop during their field postings. The upturn of primary health care is the need of the hour and call for an immediate requirement to review and strengthen the education system for the training of the community health workforce. (1) Similarly, the nursing profession is built upon the concept of developing competencies required in the field of practice, and these competencies are furthermore essential for community health nurses as they work as independent practitioners in the field. (2).

The nursing competencies are mainly classified into traits, behaviorism, and holism theory. Traits are directly related to the individual competency (critical thinking and knowledge), which is required to perform duty effectively. Secondly, behaviorism is nurses' own ability to perform the duty and holism is a bunch of elements exercise together i.e. knowledge, attitude, critical thinking, values, professional judgment, etc. In the nursing profession, core competencies are complex of the above mentioned and acquaint nurses can exercise these in different circumstances. (2) The competency-based approach helps us to define the role and responsibilities of community workers.

Need of competencies and its evaluation tool

Preparing and maintaining the competencies standard is the main function of every profession, it reflects the accountability, care standard, and achievement in preventive and promotive activities. The defined set of core competencies and their evaluation can serve as a benchmark in care execution by nurses. There is a total of 66% population of India residing in rural areas and only 33% of total health workers are active here. The proportion of community nurses serving as key health workers in rural areas is 36%. (3)

A well-designed standardized tool gives directions for competencies development among students at initial stages and will be a bigger gain in professional advancement and quality care. (4) This review will keenly appraise the importance of assessment tools for core competencies among community nurses.

Methods

Search Strategy

A research strategy was built to identify the publications related to core competencies for community health nurses. The following databases were explored i.e. Data Bases: PubMed, Scopus, and Google scholar were accessed. The search terms were Search Terms: competencies AND community AND nurses OR nursing students, community nurses AND core competencies, nurses AND core competencies AND evaluation OR tool, core competencies AND nurses AND evaluation tool. MeSH terms and Boolean operator were used.

Selection Criteria

Original papers, systematic reviews, studies with the primary outcome as competencies, methodological studies, and interventional studies were included in the review. Incomplete papers, papers exploring competencies of other professionals were excluded.

Data Extraction

The total number of studies were identified through databases was 1532, out of which 33 duplicates were removed. Out of that 1429 articles were excluded as these were not related to the core competencies of nurses. Total 70 articles were screened 41 papers with poor structure, incomplete information, and paper in other languages were excluded. The final number of studies reviewed was 16.

Results

Difference between the community health nursing core competencies than another context of nursing competency

Core competency in community health nursing refers to implementing the knowledge, skills, abilities into practice. (5) The role of physicians and nurses is different in primary health care. The physicians merely focus upon the diagnosis and treatment of patients visiting the health center, whereas community nurses practice carry out preventive activities and promotive activities for public health. The role of the community nurse is widened and vary according to the geographical distribution. (6)

The competencies of hospital nurses and community health nurses are also different from each other in terms of care context. Hospital nurses focus upon the treatment of hospitalized clients, whereas community health nurses aim to decrease the risk among the target public. The community nurse targets the population for disease prevention, health promotion, and rehabilitative activities. Community nurses work as independent practitioners in the field but hospital nurses work in the integration of physicians. (7) The competencies range of nurses also varies according to developing and developed countries too. The community health care model of developed countries mainly insists upon health promotion of community population, but on the flip side developing countries are still raising funds, making policies and decisions to carry out curative activities in different sections of countries. (8)

Components of core competencies

The required set of core competencies for community nurses are; evidence-based practice, systematic documentation, and evaluation, assess health needs, planning – implement and evaluating the care in a domiciliary setting, patient education, teaming up with other disciplines, applying educational strategies, involving the individual family in decision making, communication, health promotion, practicing professional standards, professional and interpersonal relations, accountability, development of leadership and decision making, alleviate suffering, cultural competency, health education, and work as a change agent. (9) (10) The latest gazette of the Indian nursing council also defined the required core competencies in the community health nursing curriculum. The enlisted core competencies are the pivot of community health services and ensure a refined approach toward public health. (11) The nursing students are also confronting bigger challenges, societal expectations, transforming the attitude of the community. (12)

A measurement tool for evaluating the core competencies of undergraduate nursing can also evaluate the psychometric properties with core competencies. Graduate nurses after receiving the basic education keep on building new competencies throughout their lives. This modern era of nursing also expects them to fit well in a new technological workspace with required core skills. The evaluatory measure helps to evaluate the extent of achievement in the context of developing core competencies. This can also help as an education guide for the students to deliver quality patient care. (4)The assessment scale can help to construct the competencies throughout the educational years and after that self-evaluation induces a bigger room for core competencies updating and development according to the dynamic needs of the target society. (13)

Evaluation of Competencies

The resurgence of community health care is a need of the hour and call for an immediate requirement to review and build up an evaluation tool for the education system with a strengthened training system for the community health workforce. (14) Although our Indian Nursing Council has defined the above-mentioned core competencies for community nurses there is no standardized tool available to assess the extent of core competencies development among community nurses. (15) The available tools are developed by various organizations of different countries for assessing the core competencies of community nurses but they are lacking in the resource pool, care required at root level in developing countries, variation in health program focus, local health care system, and other health care aspects of India. (16)

A broad consensus exists in the set of core competencies required for community/public health nurses but the review of competencies and newly developed tools to assess the same will serve the purpose of Indian nurses.

Conclusion

This review was to club the facts available regarding the peculiar need for core competencies development among community nurses and tools available to assess it. These exercises will work as a catalyst to develop an India-focused standardized evaluation tool for the assessment of community health nursing core competencies. The probable tool carries the possibilities of skill development and patient care. The standardized assessment scale for core competencies assessment will help ensure quality care by nurses working in rural settings. The standardized range of competencies and its evaluatory scale can be utilized for professional uplifting and development. This can help the profession in pre-evaluation for licensure, eligibility criteria for the job, and continuous development of core competencies according to the dynamic rural and urban societies of India.

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