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**ORIGINAL STUDY**

Awareness about Patient's Rights Charter and professional ethics among Nurses and Midwives

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Abstract

Background: Respecting patients' rights is the nation's top concern in terms of medical ethics because failing to do so will hasten recovery times, lengthen hospital stays, and increase costs associated with patient care. Respect for patients' rights is one of the majority of research that has concentrated largely on a health system that will be essential in improving patients' health. This study aimed to determine how Alborz Nursing and Midwifery staff adhered to the patient autonomy charter in relation to their understanding of the charter and their professional ethics.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study of midwives and nurses employed by a secondary care hospital in a remote district of Karachi was done. Twenty nurses and twenty-five midwives freely took part in the study and responded to a pretested, structured questionnaire about their understanding of patient rights and professional ethics.

Results: The study's participants were 21.33.45 years old on average. The majority of research participants were familiar with some fundamental patient rights. The majority of research participants are from the lower middle class and have only completed their secondary education.

Conclusion: It is found that there is a correlation between professional ethics and understanding of the patient's rights charter. Thus, it is possible to promote adherence to the patient rights charter and its components by developing programs to improve nurses' and midwives' comprehension of this subject and their professional ethics.

Keywords

Patient Right, Nurses, Midwives, Right Charter, Awareness



Introduction

The nation's highest priority around medical ethics is respecting patients' rights¹. Respecting patients' rights will speed up the healing process, lengthen hospital stays, and raise the expense of patient care². One of most studies that have focused primarily on a health system that will play a crucial role in advancing patients' health is the respect for patients' rights³. The crucial fact is that while setting rules for the governance of clinical services, one of the fundamental pillars is patients' rights⁴. As a result, ethical rules will be employed to improve performance in addition to raising the standard of care and public confidence in the field. Any meddling here could obscure the scientific findings and the highest caliber of treatment⁵. A manager cannot function without a moral framework since ethics play a crucial and important role in attitudes, communications, decisions, and behaviors⁶.

Professional ethics is a process of logical reasoning that aims to uphold and spread professional principles in order to create the ideal environment for realizing stakeholders' rights through desired social connections⁷ one of the core components of professional education. In order for the patient to receive treatment with more assurance and trust, it requires the nursing and midwifery personnel to uphold ethical norms. Paying attention to and defending the rights of patients is one of the tenets of professional ethics. In order to defend the rights of the patients, the proper ethical decisions must be made. In addition to preserving and advancing patients' health, it is important to examine and work toward upholding their rights⁸. Yet, the findings of numerous research have revealed that Iran's medical staff's understanding of and adherence to the Patient's Rights Charter is not in good condition^{9,10}. Fazeli et al. demonstrated that educational therapeutic facilities are doing a good job of upholding the patient charter¹¹.

Another study demonstrated that protecting the rights of pregnant women is also facilitated by midwives' awareness of ethical standards and patients' rights¹². Healthcare practitioners won't be able to meet the issues without knowledge of ethical principles and associated subjects, such as "patient's rights," given that studies suggest that patient awareness of their rights has increased. Hence, paying close attention to these ideas is crucial for delivering high-quality treatment¹³. Nursing and midwifery staff will be better able to communicate with and support patients, which will result in higher patient satisfaction. They will also be more aware of the code of ethics and the charter of patients' rights. On the other hand, this information lowers medical expenses and mistakes and, ultimately, improves patient services and professional independence.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how the patient rights charter was observed by Nursing and Midwifery personnel in connection to their knowledge of the charter and their professional ethics.

Methodology

It was a cross sectional study conducted on midwives and nurses working at a secondary care hospital in a rural area Karachi. The study was conducted between June and July of 2022. 20 nurses and 25 midwives voluntarily participated in this study and answered a structured and pre-tested questionnaire which was focused on knowledge of nurses and midwives regarding patient's rights and professional ethics.

Result

The average age of the participants of this study were 21 ± 3.45 years. Majority of the study participants were aware of some basic rights of the patients. Most of the study participants belong to a lower middle class and have attained only secondary education. (Table 1)

Table 1: Demographic Data.

Variables	Responses n(%)	
Gender	Male	00
	Female	45(100)
Marital status	Single	35(78)
	Married	8(18)
	Divorced	2(5)
Education	Primary	0(0)
	Secondary	23(73)
	Higher Secondary	15(33)
	Professional Degree	7(16)
Socio-economic Background	Lower	35(78)
	Middle	10(22)
	Upper	0(0)

Table 2 shows the different types of professional ethics in nurses and midwives.

Table 2: Professional ethics in Nurses and Midwives

Variables	Aware Nurses n(%) (n=20)	Aware Midwives n(%) (n=25)
Responsibility to fulfill the duty	17(85)	20(80)
Respect the patient	16 (80)	19(76)
Improving the quality of patient care	15(75)	23(92)

Awareness of patient's right charter is describe in table 3.

Table 3: Awareness of patient's rights charter (Nurses)

Variables	Nurses n(%) (n=20)		Midwives n(%) (n=25)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Patient's access to information	15(75)	5(25)	15(60)	10(40)
Get optimal health services	13(65)	7(35)	17(68)	8(32)
The right to freely choose and make decisions	9(45)	11(55)	8(32)	17(85)
Respect for patient privacy	10(50)	10(50)	12(48)	13(52)
Access to an efficient complaint handling system	3(15)	17(85)	8(32)	17(68)

Discussion

One of the study's findings shows that nurses' knowledge of midwives was excellent and their awareness of patients' rights was moderate. Similar findings were found in research by Hassan et al., which indicated that nurses' knowledge of patients' rights is moderate¹⁴. Yet, it goes against research by Mortazavi et al. that indicated that

few nurses and doctors are aware of patients' rights¹⁵.

The current study revealed that midwives had a high charter of patients' rights observance and nurses had a moderate charter of patients' rights adherence. An Iranian investigation revealed that hospital staff did not adhere to health service standards in a suitable manner¹⁶. This conclusion

diverges from those of our investigation. Of course, a nurse's professional conduct might be influenced by their adherence to professional ethics and knowledge of the charter of patients' rights. When delivering nursing care, adherence to professional ethics and respect for patients' rights can certainly provide a higher quality of care. The component of choice in decision-making received the lowest score in the current study in terms of awareness and observance of patients' charter of rights by midwives. It is obvious that midwives spend less time talking with patients about their conditions and paying attention to their concerns, and as a result, the patient's opinion is not taken into consideration when choosing the methods and steps of treatment. This is because patient participation in decision-making and providing patients with sufficient information can increase the efficiency of treatment by increasing the knowledge of both parties. As a result, to uphold this idea, culture change and education are required¹⁷.

The complaints handling system received the lowest rating from nurses in terms of knowledge and observance of the charter of patients' rights. As is obvious, understanding the law is typically a requirement for its application. Executive assurance is needed to put the laws into action, and one method to ensure that is by making sure that the rightful owners are aware of their rights¹⁸. When offering midwifery services, emphasis is placed on the standard of care given to the mother, fetus, and/or infant. Better health services for mothers and children can result from knowledge of the charter of patients' rights, adherence to its rules, and provision of services grounded in ethics.

The high level of professional ethics among nurses and midwives was another finding of this study. Another study looked at how nursing staff and patients viewed professional ethics compliance and awareness. The findings indicated that nursing staff members had a moderate level of awareness of professional ethics. According to the findings of the current study, there was a statistically significant

correlation between nursing staff awareness and their adherence to professional ethics¹⁹. The majority of nursing and midwifery students in an Iranian study that assessed their attitudes toward professional ethics had favorable attitudes regarding those principles²⁰. This outcome is in line with the current investigation. Of course, this study involved nursing and midwifery students, whereas the current study involved practicing nurses and midwives. Gonzalez-de Paz et al study's which contrasts with the current study, revealed that nurses' professional ethics are low in practice²¹. The results also show a connection between knowledge of the patient's rights charter and observance of the patient's rights charter. Hence, the patient rights charter is more frequently observed by nurses and midwives who are more familiar with it. An Iranian study revealed that there is a strong correlation between nurses' knowledge of patients' rights and their adherence to those rights²². Our findings concur with those of their study. Kim et al. demonstrated that understanding patients' rights is a crucial part of nursing compliance and that there is a strong association between these two factors in their study to evaluate nurses' awareness of and adherence to patients' rights²³.

Our findings concur with those of their study. According to numerous studies, competency in clinical practice and professional ethics are correlated, therefore competence in clinical practice results in the provision of appropriate services and care for the patients²⁴⁻²⁸. It appears that Iranian students' strong awareness of the patient charter and dedication to ethical treatment are the results of the country's midwifery and nursing education system. Another finding of our study was the correlation between nurses' compliance with the patient's rights charter and gender, work experience, marital status, and employment position. The compliance of the patient's rights charter in midwives also has a relationship with factors like work title, employment interest, and economic status. Their findings concurred with those of several investigations^{29,30}. The nature of the study is one of its limitations because no causal linkages can

be inferred from the relationships found in this study. Also, because of time restrictions, it was not possible to compare the analyzed variables among clinical faculty groups who also instruct students. On the other hand, it was unable to compare these variables between these two occupational categories due to the restricted access to midwives.

Conclusion

The results of our study indicate that among nurses and midwives, there is a correlation between professional ethics and understanding of the patient's rights charter. For nurses, gender, work history, marital status, and employment status were also associated with patient rights charter compliance; for midwives, it was associated with job position, job interest, and financial status. Thus, it is possible to promote adherence to the patient rights charter and its components by developing programs to improve nurses' and midwives' comprehension of this subject and their professional ethics. The outcome of this training will be patient satisfaction in this area.

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