



Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses

CFMHN

We are a national voice for psychiatric and mental health (PMH) nursing in Canada



**CORE COMPETENCIES
in
PSYCHIATRIC
MENTAL HEALTH NURSING
for
UNDERGRADUATE
NURSING EDUCATION
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Authors:

**P. Tognazzini (BC), C. Davis (ON), A.M. Kean (NL),
M. Osborne (AB), K. Wong (ON)**

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INTRODUCTION

The future of psychiatric - mental health (PMH) nursing lies in the preparation of new graduate nurses who will meet the mental health care needs of society. In Canada, one in five people suffer from a mental illness (Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative, 2006). The World Health Organization (2008) predicts that by 2020 depression will be the leading cause of disability second only to heart disease. Mental illness is also a contributor to mortality rates. The Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of British Columbia states that suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth 15 to 24 years of age (2008).

Stigma towards persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses has persisted throughout history. Nursing students are not immune to societal perceptions and discrimination towards this population. Although as a nation we have become more tolerant, negative beliefs and attitudes among health care providers towards persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses still exist (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs Science and Technology, 2006). This emphasizes the need for significant enhancement of PMH nursing in undergraduate curricula.

There is a significant percentage of the Canadian population

that do not receive the treatment and care they need for mental health problems and mental illnesses. Access to mental health services is an ongoing concern as the mental health system continually struggles with limited resources. Nurses will encounter persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses in all areas of health care such as the person with depression after heart surgery or families with a member exhibiting signs of a drug induced psychosis or a person suffering from a crisis with post-traumatic stress symptoms. How will these new graduate nurses be able to advocate for persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses if they have not had PMH nursing exposure through their undergraduate nursing program? “In order to practice holistically,

nurses need knowledge of and experience with psychiatric mental health nursing issues” (Chan, Buchanan, Forchuk, Moore, & Wessell, 1998). The Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses (CFMHN), an affiliate of the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), has as one of its major foci the quality and quantity of undergraduate PMH nursing theory and practice in Canadian schools of nursing. In 1998, the CFMHN education committee developed a position paper (Chan, Buchanan, Forchuk, Moore, & Wessell, 1998) which responded to major curriculum concerns. It reported that some generic undergraduate nursing programs do not require nursing students to have theory or clinical experience in PMH nursing.

BACKGROUND

In 2006, in preparation for a review and revision of the 1998 position statement, the current CFMHN education committee conducted a national environmental scan of undergraduate nursing programs in Canada. Thirty schools of nursing responded to our questionnaire that asked if a stand alone course in PMH nursing was included and if this course also required clinical experience in a PMH setting. The participating schools of nursing were also asked about the number of hours of clinical practice and the number of hours of theory in PMH nursing in their respective programs.

Results of the scan indicated that 20% of the schools of nursing that participated did

not offer a stand alone course in PMH nursing and did not offer any clinical experience in this area. Some schools of nursing stated that PMH nursing theory was “threaded” throughout the curriculum. Of the 80% of the schools of nursing that offered a stand alone course, the number of hours of theory and the number of hours of clinical practice in a PMH setting varied greatly. The hours of theory ranged from 1.5 to 7.5 hours a week for 12 weeks with the mean being three hours a week for that duration of time. The number of hours of clinical experience in a PMH setting varied from 25 to 330 hours over a 12 week period with a mean of nine hours a week. The clinical settings included inpatient

psychiatric units in general hospitals and psychiatric hospitals as well as outpatient and day programs. Some schools also offered community experience at mental health and assertive case management teams.

Studies exploring nursing students' attitudes and beliefs prior to clinical experiences in PMH nursing indicate that there is fear that persons with a mental illness are dangerous (Happell, 1999). Clinical experience was identified as the most important determinant in changing these fears and in gaining a more favourable view of this area of nursing (Happell, 2008; Rushworth and Happell, 2000). Nurses who graduate without any clinical experience in PMH nursing state that they have insufficient knowledge, skills and confidence in

intervening with persons who have mental health problems and mental illnesses. Research conducted in urban areas has found that many nurses are unprepared to support the mental health needs of persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses (Brinn, 2000). How can schools of nursing ethically graduate nursing students who have little or no knowledge of caring for 20% of the Canadian population who experience a mental illness? If there is no exposure to the lives and suffering of persons and families with mental health problems and mental illnesses, are we as educators perpetuating societal stigma?

The CFMHN have anecdotally received reports from employers that new graduate nurses are unable to perform the

basic skill of a mental status examination and lack fundamental PMH nursing knowledge upon graduation. This supports the literature in emphasizing that clinical experience is highly influential on the extent to which nursing students are able to acquire the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes to care for persons with

mental health problems and mental illnesses (Martin & Happell, 2001; Mullen & Murray, 2002). Exposure to formal PMH treatment settings can motivate nursing students to seek both preceptorships and further preparation for employment in this specialized area of practice after graduation.

POSITION STATEMENT

The Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses [CFMHN] recommends that all undergraduate nursing programs include a required stand alone theory course in PMH nursing with a clinical experience in a psychiatric or mental health/addictions care setting.

The CFMHN recommends essential education (both knowledge and skills) in PMH nursing for all undergraduate nursing students in Canada. Implications for a focused stand alone course in PMH nursing in undergraduate nursing programs consist of application of core competencies in both theory content and clinical practice. The implementation of core competencies into the undergraduate curriculum is of utmost importance in the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of nursing care with persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, their

families and communities. These core competencies can be applied to mental health promotion and also in primary, secondary and tertiary treatment programs.

We also recommend collaboration between educators and nursing staff to provide clinical experiences for nursing students. The CFMHN believes that this matter is critical to the visibility and advancement of the overall mental health of Canadians. The need for education of future nurses to gain knowledge, abilities and skills in PMH nursing is reflected in these core competencies.

CORE COMPETENCIES IN PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSING FOR UNDERGRADUATE NURSING EDUCATION

Throughout this document “persons” is synonymous with clients, patients, recipients of care, consumers and persons in care across the life span

Core Competency I - Therapeutic Relationships	
Objectives	PMH Nursing Knowledge /Skills
<p>Develops therapeutic relationships with persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p>	<p>Examines the socio-political, historical, spiritual and cultural influences when caring for persons with mental health problems or mental illnesses, their families and communities</p> <p>Advocates, promotes and values the lived experience as told by persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p> <p>Identifies and responds to the effects of stigma on the lives of persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p> <p>Identifies the influences of personal beliefs, values and life experiences and</p>

	<p>their impact on therapeutic relationships</p> <p>Recognizes and responds to the impact that power relations can have on therapeutic relationships</p> <p>Recognizes how issues of diversity impact the delivery of culturally and contextually competent nursing care</p> <p>Acknowledges and enhances the persons' sense of resiliency, self-esteem, power and hope</p> <p>Applies the principles of cultural safety by providing nursing care within the cultural values and norms of persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, their families and communities</p> <p>Demonstrates therapeutic verbal and non verbal communication skills that include empathy, active listening, genuineness and inquiry that enhance partnerships and collaboration within therapeutic relationships</p>
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Core Competency II - Diagnostic and Monitoring Function	
Objectives	PMH Nursing Knowledge/Skills
Collaboratively collects, analyzes and synthesizes the health status data of persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses	Demonstrates knowledge and skill in mental status assessment with particular attention to typical and atypical presentations in behavioural, psychological, emotional and cognitive

	<p>domains</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of mental health, mental illnesses and addictions, which includes categories of mental illness, indicators of mental health and mental illness, etiology, psychosocial therapies and pharmacological therapies</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge and skill of risk assessment</p> <p>Collaborates with persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, their families and members of the health care team to gather holistic assessments through observation, examination, interview and consultation while being attentive to issues of confidentiality and pertinent legal statutes</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of stages of change , key concepts and processes of addiction , range and type of addictive substances, harm reduction concepts and methods and the impact on health status</p> <p>Analyzes and documents base line data to identify health status, potential for wellness, health care deficits, alterations in thought content and/or process, affective behaviour, communication and decision making abilities</p>
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Core Competency III - Therapeutic Interventions

Objectives	PMH Nursing Knowledge/Skills
<p>Uses critical and systematic thinking and nursing judgement in the provision of assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of nursing care in partnership with the health care team, persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses and their families</p>	<p>Develops and implements clinical interventions that integrate the persons' strengths and recognizes the importance of self care , the impact of the social determinants of health and the persons' psychosocial, spiritual and mental attributes</p> <p>Searches and evaluates evidence informed nursing interventions specifically with persons experiencing alterations in thought processes, affective behaviours, suicidal and homicidal thoughts and self deficits</p> <p>Recognizes that persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses demonstrate variability to participate in the processes of choice and decision-making</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of relevant resources that maintain a continuum of services to improve quality of care</p> <p>Administers medication accurately and safely, monitoring therapeutic responses, extrapyramidal symptoms, tardive dyskinesia reactions, untoward effects, toxicity and potential incompatibilities with other medications and illicit substances</p> <p>Provides medication education in partnership with the health care team and persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p>

	<p>Attends and evaluates the efficacy of both self-help groups (e.g. 12 step groups) and mental health support groups that incorporate the concepts of recovery and empowerment</p> <p>Demonstrates beginner level knowledge of various principles & methods of group facilitation</p>
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Core Competency IV - Rapidly Changing Situations	
Objectives	PMH Nursing Knowledge/ Skills
<p>Assesses the need for safety and utilizes continual assessment to manage the detection, prevention, intervention and post - vention phases of the crisis situation with persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p>	<p>Assesses and implements nursing interventions and reports changes in behaviour that impact on safety for persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of theory and skills in non- violent least restrictive crisis intervention</p> <p>Reflects upon and evaluates the impact of critical interventions in partnership with the health care team and whenever possible, with persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p> <p>Reflects on the impact that physical and/or chemical restraints have on persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p> <p>In collaboration with the health care team, utilizes risk assessments and safety measures to protect persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses , families, others and self from potentially dangerous situations</p>

Core Competency V - The Teaching Coaching Function	
Objectives	PMH Nursing Knowledge/Skills
Demonstrates ability to work in partnership with advocacy groups, families, communities and persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses to plan and support choices that promote and maximize mental health	<p>Demonstrates understanding of and respects the lived experience of persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses and uses this understanding to support and promote learning related to the maintenance of mental health</p> <p>Collaborates with persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, families and communities to implement health promotion education that considers their context ,experiences, readiness to learn, culture, literacy, language, preferred learning style and available resources</p> <p>Determines the effectiveness of the educational process and collaboratively develops ways to meet the learning needs of persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, families and communities</p> <p>Engages in teaching/learning opportunities in partnership with the health care team and persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, families and communities</p> <p>Engages in activities to educate others about the impact of stigma and discrimination towards mental health/mental illness</p>

Core Competency VI - Quality of Health Care Practices	
Objectives	PMH Nursing Knowledge/Skills
Understands that mental health care occurs under the provisions of provincial / territorial Mental Health Acts and related legislation	Demonstrates understanding of current and relevant legislation and the implications to therapeutic relationships
Understands models of care which effectively guide practice	Demonstrates understanding of 'best practices' in both mental health and addictions
Understands the purpose of strategies for continuous organizational improvement	Demonstrates understanding of the continuous improvement to the organizational and or system structures in keeping with the principles of delivering competent, culturally safe and ethical nursing care
	Demonstrates understanding of the determinants of health and the impact of these determinants on persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, families and communities
	Recognizes the impact of changes in the mental health care system both locally, nationally and globally
	Demonstrates understanding of the purpose of the current edition of the Canadian Standards of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing
	Advocates for persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses

	within the context of the health care environment
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Core Competency VII - Organizational and Work-Role Structures	
Objectives	PMH Nursing Knowledge/Skills
Assesses, plans, implements and evaluates programs of treatment in collaboration with the health care team and persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses	<p>Critically evaluates research findings and the relevance for practice related to PMH nursing</p> <p>Uses evidence informed nursing interventions that can be implemented within complex situations</p> <p>Demonstrates understanding of the importance of collaborative strategies for social action and social justice for persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses, families, advocacy groups and communities</p> <p>Has knowledge of the roles of health care team members and the impact on the care of persons with mental health problems and mental illnesses</p>

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