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LETTER To EDITOR

Difference between Nurses' Performance in the Maxillofacial Department and Other Medical Fields

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Dear Editor

Providing proper systematic and comprehensive nursing care is crucial for holistic patient management in hospitals. Nursing plays a vital role in providing comprehensive healthcare to individuals with various illnesses, including those in the maxillofacial and medical fields. Maxillofacial nursing specializes in caring for patients with head, face, neck, and oral cavity injuries, diseases, or surgical conditions. This article explores the differences in nursing performance between these two areas, focusing on clinical skills, communication, documentation, and quality of care. It emphasizes the importance of specialized training and interdisciplinary collaboration to optimize nursing performance in maxillofacial settings. Understanding and appreciating the unique challenges faced by healthcare professionals across specialties are essential for scholars.

Nursing education mainly occurs in hospitals and is primarily taught by professors specializing in the field. However, there is limited exposure to dental/maxillofacial procedures for nurses. The Nursing Council highlights the insufficient courses in the curriculum integrating dental/maxillofacial education for nursing students. This gap is not only evident in Iran but is also a global issue (1). Consequently, inexperienced nurses may find it challenging to care for maxillofacial patients due to their limited knowledge and skills in this domain. This often leads to the patient care responsibility being solely placed on maxillofacial surgeons or even overlooked entirely. Kumar et al. (2020) conducted a survey evaluating nurses' knowledge and awareness of managing maxillofacial injuries. They concluded that increased awareness, validated guidelines, and training resources are needed to enable nurses to provide appropriate and sufficient care to patients with maxillofacial injuries (2).

Self-confidence is another crucial component of performance. The primary factors in developing self-confidence are knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, it has been shown that lack of knowledge can undermine this self-confidence (3). Therefore, enhancing nurses' knowledge in this area not only helps patients receive better treatment but also increases nurses' confidence in the upcoming challenges in hospitals.

The maxillofacial department focuses on diagnosing and treating conditions related to the face, jaw, and mouth, while medical fields

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encompass various specialties, such as internal medicine, surgery, and pediatrics. Consequently, nurses in these domains encounter distinct patient populations with different needs. It is noteworthy that numerous studies have shown that nurses and medical practitioners often lack awareness of this specialty and infrequently consult or refer patients to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon (4).

Maxillofacial nurses cater to patients with facial trauma or reconstructive surgery needs, while nurses in the other departments often deal with various medical conditions, providing comprehensive assessments, medication administration, vital sign monitoring, and multidisciplinary care coordination. Communication skills are crucial for maxillofacial nurses to interact with patients with speech difficulties, provide clear postoperative care instructions, and coordinate care among interdisciplinary teams. Technical expertise is also vital for maxillofacial nurses, who administer local anesthesia, assist during oral surgeries, and manage postoperative care for the facial region. Collaborating with oral and maxillofacial surgeons, they utilize their expertise in facial anatomy, dental care, and surgical techniques, managing pain, wounds, and complications, and providing nutritional support. Addressing patients' emotional needs, they offer psychosocial support and counseling. Accurate documentation ensures continuity of care and facilitates collaboration between healthcare providers, enhancing patient safety (5).

In maxillofacial nursing, monitoring patients for complications and providing postoperative care instructions and emotional support to patients and their families are critical for quality patient care. Nurses must have knowledge about prevalent maxillofacial conditions and possess specialized skills, such as oral care management, wound care, and pain management. Interdisciplinary collaboration with surgeons, anesthesiologists, oral hygienists, and other healthcare professionals is necessary.

Collaboration differs between the maxillofacial department and medical fields. Maxillofacial nurses mainly collaborate with oral and maxillofacial surgeons, dentists, orthodontists, and speech therapists, while nurses in medical fields work with physicians from various specialties, pharmacists, physical therapists, and other healthcare professionals.

Specialized education and interdisciplinary collaboration optimize nursing performance and improve patient outcomes in the maxillofacial field. Healthcare organizations should recognize these differences to provide comprehensive and specialized care. Continuous professional development is necessary to maintain competence in this specialized field.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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