

Effective Nursing Intervention in Reducing Surgical Patients Complication and Prolonged Hospitalization

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Abstract:

Caring is the vital core and the essence of nursing. Nursing care incorporates physical, emotional, mental and social aspects of life, so as to improve patient health and wellbeing. A patient's wait time and length of stay commences as soon as they walk through the doors of a hospital department and terminate when the patient is discharged home. Prolonged hospitalization is described as length of stay longer than two weeks. Nurses play a significant role in decreasing surgical patients' complications and the length of hospital stay as they are in the core of patient care. Nursing Intervention when put in place by nurses enhances the total wellbeing of patients, limits long waiting time and reduce prolong hospitalization. It is therefore recommended among others that teamwork should be encouraged among nurses in nursing intervention process.

Keywords: Nursing Intervention, Surgical Patients, Complication, Prolonged Hospitalization,

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Introduction

Nursing is the assistance given to an individual to help them recover from illnesses, to promote their health and improve on their quality of life. It centers on promotion of health, recovery from illness and diseases. Caring has remained the art and science of nursing's essence (Lisa, 2016). Caring is the vital core and the essence of nursing. Nursing is known as an art and a science with caring forming the theoretical framework. It entails the harnessing a conducive health promotion and wellbeing. It is a life-giving and life-receiving career that will lead to life-time learning and growth when caring is imparted into it (Waston, 2016). Nursing care incorporates physical, emotional, mental and social aspects of life, so as to improve patient health and wellbeing. The link between the nurse and the patient being cared for can be more effective when the art of caring is incorporated into the patient's management. The unique function of nursing is to render aid and to meet the demand of the client. To achieve this, there is need for person-centred care in which the care recipient is treated as an individual and not just an object.

The length of stay as well as previous experiences during hospitalization affected patient's satisfaction. The patients with more hospitalization experience have more convincing expectations and are therefore easily satisfied (Rahmqvist, 2016). Rahmqvist (2016), revealed that the decision to receive care in a hospital by the patient apparently reflects the good previous experiences at that hospital. A patient's wait time and length of stay commences as soon as they walk through the doors of a hospital department and doesn't terminate till the patient is either discharged home or admitted to hospital. The reasons for long wait times are multipart and often unique to each hospital department.

The weight of prolonged hospital stay of surgical patients can be devastating to patients and their care givers, nurses and other health professional in the hospital. It has caused increased spending because of huge hospital bills to cater for, deprived socio-economic activities, psychological pressure and other health complications on patients. Hospitalization and management of new and more critically ill patients becomes uneasy because of limited bed spaces leading to rising mortality rate among members of the society. Also, the utilization of a lot of hospital resources on only a patient can negatively affect hospital's income. Long hospital stay increases work load for health care providers especially nurses which may eventually affect the quality of care rendered to patients. (Chiu, Lin, Hsieh, Chen, Wang & Wang 2017)

Nurses play a significant role in decreasing surgical patients' complications and the length of hospital stay as they are in the core of patient care. A poor nursing care is likely to increase the risk of complications and extend patients' length of hospital stay. However, several factors could also add to prolonged hospital stay such as patients' physiological state, the presences of other medical condition, age etc. Postoperative nursing intervention for surgical patients commences immediately after surgical intervention and terminates when patient fully recover from the surgery. Nursing intervention encompasses but are not limited to maintaining patent airway, monitoring vital signs and intravenous fluid, pain management, providing psychological care, wound and skin care, appropriate health education, early mobilization of patients (Wojahn & Kaczkowski, 2021).



Concept of Prolonged Hospitalization

Length of stay (LOS) is an essential measure of resource utilization as patients with prolonged LOS excessively account for the use of more hospital resources. Length of stay needlessly utilizes hospital beds, contributing to capacity shortage. Inpatient bed shortage debar elective admissions and makes emergency department boarding to rise more, which denies critically ill patients prompt access to treatment, as inpatient care usually begins only after the patient gets to the assigned inpatient ward (Singer, Thode, Viccellio, & Pines, 2011).

The concept of prolonged hospitalization and complication can be interchanged as one can lead to the other and vice versa. Prolonged hospitalization is described as length of stay longer than 2 weeks (Moradiya, Murthy, Shah & Modi, 2014). Chiu et.al., (2017) opined that Hospital length of stay can be measured in two major forms namely prolonged length of hospital stay which is commonly used by policy makers to focus on effective utilization of resources and prolonged postoperative length of hospital stay which focus on the quality of care given to patients of which nurses play a major role.

It is however, challenging to clearly state what vivid measure can be adopted to reduce prolonged postoperative hospitalization (Cheung, 2021). He further asserted that postoperative complications and care process after surgery or method used during the surgical procedure have been considered to be major contributors to prolonged postoperative hospitalization. It is therefore, important that nurses play their role effectively so as to prevent complications and prolonged hospitalization through prompt drug administration, observation of universal infection prevention measures, proper assessment and documentation of inpatients progress of recovery, giving timely and appropriate report of patient conditions to colleagues and managing team during routine rounds, maintaining a clean environment among others.

Factors that influence hospital length of stay are:

1. Delayed or unfinished nursing care: One of the contributing factors to extended hospital stay and complication is when nursing care is either delayed, unfinished, or not done at all. Recio-Saucedo and colleagues (2017) recognized some of the causes of delayed, unfinished or missing nursing care as time needed to complete a care task, nursing staff inadequacy as compared to number patients. These causes call for prioritisation of care resulting in inadequate and poor quality of nursing care. They also added that major areas affected by delayed and unfinished nursing care that is related to positive health outcome and quality of care delivered include hospital-acquired infections, discharge planning, mortality, falls, patient mobilisation, feeding, psychological and emotional support.
2. Other factors: There are several factors which contribute to prolonged postoperative hospital stay among which are indication for surgery, activities during the surgical procedure (such as maintaining aseptic technique, need for blood transfusion, competency of the surgeon in carrying out the surgical procedure), care given after surgery, age of patient, clinical state of the patient, (Chiu et al., 2017). Furthermore, poor organization of care, delays in decision-making, or difficulties related to discharge planning have also been identified as factors influencing prolonged hospitalization.



The Essence of Nursing Intervention

One of the main purposes of nursing is patient satisfaction with nursing care which depends on holistic care taking into consideration all the domains of caring behaviour. Nurses are the frontline healthcare professional that patient meet up with, spend the highest amount of time with and rely upon for recovery during hospitalization, they play a prominent role in determining the overall satisfaction of patient's hospitalization experience (Nazloo, Feizi & Salimi, 2019). They have major roles to play in all types of health settings so as to ensure that acceptable and satisfactory care is rendered to patients. Nursing is the major factor to the provision of a safe, effective, and compassionate care at individual, family and community levels. With the improvement in healthcare environment, nursing is the only healthcare profession that has closest link with the patients hence their behaviour and connectedness influence patient satisfaction and ultimately promote quality of life.

Nursing Intervention are actions of nurses that are concerned with the total wellbeing of patients (Nazloo, Feizi & Salimi, 2019). It captures the very essence of how nurses effectively implement their practice thereby contributing significantly to patient's health and illness. It is central in the quality of care being given to the patient and the developing of a trusting and closer relationship between the patient and the nurse. The five top and important nursing intervention reported by Abdullah (2017), are treat the patient with dignity, provision of information, surveillance/monitoring of care and giving attention to patient needs are the behaviour expressed by patients to depict caring. The four domains of caring behaviours are Physical, psychological, Social and Spiritual Caring Behaviour. Respect and maintenance of older adults' dignity through nurse caring behaviour contribute immensely to the emotional comfort that aid their recovery and care satisfaction (Ella, Samson-Akpan, Mgbekem & Edet, 2016).

Nursing intervention develop the quality of care and hence lead to a sense of security, reduction of anxiety, and harmony between caregiver and care recipient (Bergdahl, Ternstedt, Bertero & Andershed, 2019) which subsequently may enhance patient satisfaction (Janet & Bronya, 2019). With demonstration of positive nursing intervention, the quality of care advances the sense of security in patients and reduces surgical patient's anxiety. When nurses render good nursing care to surgical patients, it has a positive effect on surgical patients' life and also on his satisfaction (Oztunc, 2015). Nursing Intervention can enhance the quality of care provided thereby creating a sense of belonging, allowing the patient to accept care and promote nurse-patient relationship, ultimately enhancing surgical patient satisfaction (Batbaatar, Dorjdagva, Luvsannyam, Mario-Savino & Amenta, 2016). Touch, guidance, investing time and attitudes that enhance healing by the nurses were reported by patients as reflecting caring (Benbenishty & Hannink, 2017).

Nurse caring behaviours are also necessary in some other ways, it boost the sense of security in many patients and had a vital role in reducing the anxiety level of the patients thus increasing the patients' satisfaction. When there is a harmony between patients' expectation and care received patient satisfaction with caring behaviour of nurses is achieved. The nurse caring behaviours that are structured around the needs and fragilities of older adults could play a significant impact on their care satisfaction and positive health outcomes (Kathyrine, Calong, Gil, & Soriano, 2018).



The University of Saint Augustin (2021) grouped nursing interventions into three categories based on nurses' role in patient care as:

Independent: These are procedures or care that the nurse is trained and licensed to offer without consulting other health professional. They include urinary catheterization, vital signs monitoring, treatment of pressure areas etc.

Dependent: These are interventions that the nurse is not licensed to independently provide and must depend on the instructions of other health professions. However, they can make suggestions where necessary. They include prescription of medications, physiotherapy etc.

Interdependent: Collaborative interventions which are multidisciplinary where nurse works with other health care professionals to ensure the patient receive good quality care. Example; this include post-surgery where doctor writes the medical prescription, nurses administer the drugs and assist patients in feeding and the physiotherapist comes in to rehabilitate patient.

The Nursing Interventions Classification System (NIC) categorized nursing interventions across seven domains. However, all the intervention may not be used at the same time, nurses are expected to properly assess the patient and the situation to recognize which intervention is more appropriate for a patient at a given time.

1. Family Nursing Interventions: Here, the care focus extends beyond the patient and to the family as well to assist them to cope with the health situation of their family member thus reducing anxiety and emotion issues. Example provide family member with information vital to patient care.
2. Behavioral Nursing Interventions: These categories of nursing intervention targets behavioural change which promote or maintain good health e.g. physical exercise and emotional coping methods.
3. Physiological Nursing Interventions (Basic): It encompasses procedures that promote the physical well-being and patient functioning e.g. feeding, activities of daily living among others
4. Physiological Nursing Interventions (Complex): It may include critical care where patient is rehydrated, oxygen is administered among others
5. Community Nursing Interventions: Based on public health initiatives to give health education to prevent diseases, discourage practices that are harmful to health promote and maintain health. Nursing care is focused on individuals, family and the entire community e.g. Portable water supply, education on nutrition among others.
6. Safety Nursing Interventions: These are nursing care rendered before and after surgery, to prepare patients by giving them adequate information about care on safety interventions to minimize complications and facilitate recovery. These may include instructions for using a walker or how to take a shower safely.
7. Health System Interventions: This involves the application of safety measures such as use of bed side rails, changing patient position, prevention of infection etc. It includes all procedures or interventions that is done to make sure that patient and his environment is safe and comfortable (University of Saint Augustin 2021).

Nurses' role in the health care system has revealed evidence of making more impact in patient compliance to treatment and satisfaction. It also yield positive health outcome that



can be associated with that of doctors especially in primary healthcare and chronic health conditions (Coster, Watkins & Norman 2018). Nursing intervention for surgical patients could be multifaceted and to minimize prolonged hospitalization and complications, it is vital that nurses offer care based on adequate knowledge on dimensions and possible outcomes of each patient's condition, so as to know what intervention is appropriate, when and how it should be provided.

Coster, Watkins and Norman (2018) identified the following as components of nursing intervention.

- i. Timely assessment and treatment of wounds
- ii. Maintaining patient safety, individuality, recovery, or peaceful death
- iii. Basing nursing practices on evidence (systematic, planned, knowledge-based education and experience).
- iv. Patient education, motivation, monitoring, and early identification of causes and risk factors.
- v. Minimizing causes and risk factors of health issues via necessary safe medical treatment.
- vi. Prevention of complications from existing diseases, illnesses and conditions.
- vii. Appropriate wound treatment that increases satisfaction, limits pain, increases mobility, reduces aggravating factors, and achieves a satisfactory outcome.
- viii. Scientific research and knowledge about pathology of wound formation and healing.
- ix. Identification of interventions that help rapid wound healing.
- x. Practices that develop awareness, knowledge, and relevant experience.

Luan, Zhu and Sun (2019) highlighted the following components as patient definition of effective nursing intervention:

- i. Patients and family involvement in making care decisions. Their preferences should be respected.
- ii. Self-care should be supported, where they prefer this instead of being cared for by nurses).
- iii. Effective communication of Information at a level they can understand.
- iv. Provision of empathy and emotional support by health staff.
- v. Fast and reliable health advice
- vi. Effective diagnosis, treatment, and medication
- vii. Continuity of care after discharge.

According to Luan, Zhu, and Sun, (2019), effective nursing interventions makes sure the patient is safe, reduce complication and readmission of patients after discharge. It also reduces the risk of infection. To ensure effective postoperative nursing intervention and reduce complication, the World Health Organization recommends that before receiving a patient into the ward after surgery, nurses should confirm if patient is fully conscious and observe patient airway for obstruction, hypoxia, operation site for haemorrhage, a stable vital signs (Temperature, pulse, respiration and blood pressure), postoperative pain, shivering, restlessness, vomiting and aspiration to ascertain patient fitness to be transferred to the ward. There should be detailed order on vital signs, pain control, rate and type of intravenous fluid, fluid intake and output, medications and Laboratory investigations. Nurses should



ensure that order notes are clearly and properly written to avoid medical error and orders should be promptly implemented.

Surgical Patient Satisfaction with Nursing Intervention

Patient satisfaction is an expression of patient's over all judgement on the quality of care being given (Rutter, Savona, Glonti, Bibby, Cummins & Finegood, 2017). It could be determined by the patient's judgment of improved health outcomes, healing and cure, the way in which interactions with healthcare providers occurred, or the emotional tone of the care given (Singh & Prasher, 2019). It is an important indicator of quality health care (Nazloo, Feizi & Salimi, 2019) and influences both patient compliance and continuity of care. Nursing provides physical, psychological, social and spiritual care which is a determinant of health status of an individual. Patient assessment of caring behaviour of nurses has an important effect on their care satisfaction. The caring behaviours of nurses cause a sense of security, reduction of anxiety in older adults which subsequently enhances patient satisfaction (Lisa, 2016). Patient's satisfaction with nursing care has become established as the most important predictor of the overall satisfaction with hospital care and an important goal of any health care organization.

Satisfaction with nursing intervention is highly essential in the field of health care, patients who are more satisfied with their care are more likely to comply to prescribed regimens and thus contributing to positive influence on health. In measuring the level of patient satisfaction with nursing care is important to determine and evaluate whether patients' needs and expectations are met which can help nurses to plan appropriate nursing interventions for the patients (Darega, Dida, Letimo, Hunde, Hayile, Yeshitla & Amare, 2016). Also measuring patients' satisfaction with nursing care also could be effective in improving nursing service quality by facilitating the creation of standards for care.

Moderate level of satisfaction with the nursing care was reported by (Kol, Arikan, Ilaslan, Akinci & Kocak-Collegian, 2018). Evaluation of patient satisfaction with care is essential in evaluating if patient healthcare needs are met which later help in planning and implementation of specific intervention for patient. Provision of quality care and good nursing intervention is necessary to fulfil the patients' needs and expectations at a satisfactory level (Rehan & Kanji 2015).

Complications Prevention through Nursing Intervention

Wojahn and Kaczkowski (2021) states that to prevent complications, the following nursing intervention should be done as aftercare:

1. Infection prevention: Ensuring hand and environmental hygiene, patients physical hygiene, using aseptic technique when carrying out invasive procedures, observation of operation site, use of personal protective equipment and wound care, decontamination of surfaces. According to Cheung (2021) effective care of patients to prevent infection includes; The practice of hand good hand hygiene before and after attending to patients, barrier nursing or isolation of infected cases, prompt use and removal of indwelling devices, use of aseptic technique for invasive procedures, proper use of broad-spectrum antibiotics, proper nutrition.



2. Early mobilization: Nurses should ensure that surgical patients are mobilized within 24 hours after surgery as this is one of the main factors that enhances recovery and prevents complication such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and prolonged hospital stay (Stethen, Yasir, Ghazi & Mcloughli, 2018)
3. Deep breathing and coughing: This assists in lung expansion and clears secretions from the airway thus reducing the risk of pneumonia. Nurses are expected to encourage patients to do this exercise at least hourly (Wojahn & Kaczkowski 2021)
4. Daily exercise: As much as possible patients should be encouraged to be active, e.g. They should be encouraged to move their joints, do activities of daily living and use walking aids to move as tolerated by the patient.
5. Ensure adequate nutrition: One major way to prevent complication and prolonged hospital stay is by good nutrition which will nourish and boost patients' immunity. It is therefore paramount that dieticians and nutritionist be involved in patients care and nurses are expected to work with them
6. Avoid skin breakdown and pressure sores: By assessing bony prominences, changing patient's position frequently, ensuring that linings are free from crumbs and crisis, and Keeping urine and faeces off skin.
7. Provide adequate pain control: Nurses should assess patients' level of pain using a pain assessment scale, explore psychological methods relieving pain and administer prescribed pain relieving medication timely (Wojahn & Kaczkowski 2021).
8. Administration of prescribed medication: Most patients develop complications from drug served of which some may be mild and can be easily managed while others may be so severe and can cause a permanent damage or may lead to death. It is therefore very important that nurses have a good knowledge about all drugs they administer so as to effectively determine if a particular drug is safe for the individual patient, nurses should also put into consideration the drug-drug interaction and identify the best way a drug should be administered in terms of timing and route of administration. Early recognition of side effects of drugs administered is very important in reducing complication; it is therefore the responsibility of nurses to properly assess patients for adverse and side effects emanating from administered drugs (Meddings, 2019).
9. Prevention of Falls: This can cause fractures of any part of the body. Meddings (2019) indicated that Up to 20% of patient experience falls while on admission leading to hip fracture that further makes them bed ridden. Some of the patients who are more likely to experience this are the elderly, those who are disoriented due to some medications administer, restless due to acute illness and when the height and width of the bed is not appropriate. It is therefore nurses' responsibility to prevent falls through the proper assessment of patients to identify the risk of falling and the use of bed side rails, admitting disoriented and restless patients into appropriate beds, close monitoring of acutely ill and disoriented patients, avoid slippery floors and proper orientation of patients to the environment.
10. Communication is considered as the back bone of effective nursing care. Meddings, (2019) highlighted that most complications and errors made by nurses can be



prevented via proper communication with patients, colleagues and other health professionals.

- a. Communication with colleagues: Nursing is a continuous process therefore, nurses should converse their stress and ask for help from colleagues when the work load is over whelming or better still can take a break to avoid break down and making errors that will cause patients complication.
 - b. Communication with other health profession: For maximum result in surgical patients recovery outcome, there should be proper communication between nurses and other health professional related to the patients care such as; communication of patient health status, effectiveness of all care, treatments and procedures done on patient, clarification on rational of care and treatments given, identified errors, changes made in patients care plan and so on. Nurse in all the shifts should do a proper taking over and handing over. They should acquaint themselves with patients' treatment by also reading patients care files to minimise error.
 - c. Communication with patients: A therapeutic nurse-patient relationship is expected to be maintained by nurses. Information regarding patients care should be communicated to patient help understanding easier. Nurses should avoid or minimize the use of medical jargons, evaluate patients understanding by asking patient to repeat information given and avoid giving too many information at a time to promote comprehension.
11. Discharge planning is seen as one of the strategies for reducing prolonged hospital stay and complication whose 'immediate goal is to anticipate changes in patient care needs and whose long-term goal is to ensure continuity of health care'. It is also important that planning is started immediately after admission (Mistiaen, Francke & Poot 2017).

Conclusion

The commitment of nurses to their roles in the provision of healthcare will go a long way to cut down the occurrence of complication and prolonged hospitalization of surgical patients, in the advent manpower shortage and increasing healthcare demand, nurses are expected to prioritize care given and work collaboratively with other health professional to achieve maximum health care outcomes.

Recommendations

This paper recommends the following:

1. Nurses are recommended to improve their own behaviours in all aspects of nursing intervention.
2. Team play among nurses and other health professional should be put as priority in nursing intervention process.
3. Nurses should be more rational and evidenced based in providing health care.
4. Nurses should anticipate the possibility of complication in a patient and provide interventions that will prevent or reduce it.
5. Nurses should be more diligent in their duties so as to reduce medical errors



6. If nursing care can be adequately improved, high level of the patient's satisfaction with nursing intervention can be achieved.
7. Nurses should be more present in care by developing active listening skills and be sensitive to patient's needs.

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