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Knowledge and Practices towards Dementia Care among Undergraduate Nurses in a Private Healthcare Institute in Sri Lanka

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Background: Worldwide, 50 million people have dementia and there are nearly 10 million new cases every year. Living with dementia has a tremendous effect on a person socially, psychologically and practically. Nursing care is critical in meeting needs and promoting a quality care system.

Objectives: To assess the knowledge and practices towards dementia care among nurses.

Methods: A cross-sectional quantitative descriptive study was conducted among 100 private and government sector nurses aged 18 to 60 years following a degree at a private healthcare institute, and convenience sampling technique was used with a self-administrated questionnaire. Data was analyzed with SPSS software version 25.0.

Results: Out of 100 participants, 93% were females. It was identified that 14% had dementia patients in their family and 71% had no experience with personal caring, however 61% had gained professional caring experience. Only 18% got trained in caring for patients with dementia. The majority (86%) correctly identified the definition of dementia. Awareness of the correct types of dementia, signs and symptoms, and the causes of dementia were 80%, 72% and 78%, respectively. Half of the sample was aware of correct dementia treatments, while 46% believed that psychotherapy will benefit. 50% believed that dementia patients are more prone to get depression, while 40% believed that patients with dementia should live in nursing homes. Considering practices, 66% used appropriate communication skills. Furthermore, 50% responded by showing photos, 18.2% with brief explanations and 16% offering corrections and suggestions as the management. The majority (52%) suggested that splitting the activities into simpler tasks would greatly aid.

Conclusions: Majority expressed positive aspects in caring patients with dementia. A satisfactory level of knowledge was identified, but there is a need for improving the practices among nurses.

Keywords: *Dementia, Knowledge, Nurses, Practice*