

Case Report

Nurses Role during Perinatal Bereavement

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ABSTRACT

The loss of a pregnancy is a physiological and emotional challenge for the mothers especially. This time is extremely difficult for the parents and they can exhibit emotions like anger, shock, emptiness, helplessness and loneliness. Nurses are expected to care for the bereaved families and parents regardless whether they feel prepared or not. Unfortunately, many nurses face difficulties in dealing with the mothers experiencing pregnancy loss. Lack of education and training on how to communicate better create dissatisfaction in the bereaved families. Similar incident I encountered where a female patient was dealt in a very insensitive manner during her 21st week of pregnancy which was to be terminated due to bulging of the fetal membranes. It is necessary for nurses to be well prepared to support the grieving mothers thus making nursing a trusted profession.

Keywords: Bereavement, grieving, pregnancy loss.

1. CASE SUMMARY

During my reproductive health clinical rotation, I was assigned in labor room with a senior nurse who was taking care of a 36 years old pregnant women. She was 21 weeks pregnant. On a regular check-up day, her doctor informed her that her fetal membranes are bulging, and she will have to deliver the baby. She was asked to get admitted till then. Throughout the admission process, she was very anxious and worried. She was constantly asking the nurse about her baby. She had multiple questions in her mind but none of her question were answered appropriately. Moreover, it was a very precious pregnancy for her as she conceived after 10 years. Clearly, she was not able to cope with the loss. I did not know what to tell her and how to help her in this bereaving process. The nurse was not able to provide her the emotional support which the client was expecting as she was not present with the client all the time. With little knowledge, I supported her and tried to talk with her as much as possible so that she does not keep anything to

heart. She felt very much relaxed when I talked with her about whatever she wanted to without judging her thoughts.

This experience was very upsetting for me. I felt very guilty and emotional that I was not able to help her, but I realized that as a nurse helping her in coping with the loss is very essential for the patient's mental health. I was glad that I was able to help her with all the little knowledge I had. I also felt that I should have talked to my faculty who could have assisted me in communicating with the client as it was such a sensitive issue. Any inappropriate statements could have hurt the patient's sentiments.

2. INTRODUCTION

According to Catherine Overson, a nurse must know the impact it makes on the women when she experiences a loss in order to provide emotional support [1]. Nurses must look after not only the mothers but also to both the parents and sometimes extended family in order to provide appropriate emotional care. Death of a child has such an impact on parents. They may show emotions like anger, loneliness, helplessness, anxiety etc [2]. "For many bereaved parents, the care that nursing staff provide may have a crucial effect on their response to such a death [3] [4]." This shows that how important it is to have special skills that can help in bereaving process as parents look up to the nursing staff for the care. "Nursing models emphasize the importance of the assessment of bereaved families in a culturally sensitive manner and assist caregivers in increasing

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their effectiveness, overcoming cultural ignorance and coping better with their own grief responses [5] [6].” According to SANDS, special training is needed to help bereaved parents so that nurses and midwives can be better prepared to deal with perinatal loss [7]. Nurses receive little education to prepare them for dealing with the death of an infant or for assisting bereaved couples during and after this time [8]. It is necessary that staff should have knowledge to fulfil the emotional needs and they should be compassionate enough to understand the parent loss.

3. DISCUSSION

Looking back on this incident, I felt that it is the nurse’s responsibility to help the client in the grieving process. A nurse should learn how to help bereaved women. A nurse is the one who takes care of the patient during the whole time and a patient look upon a nurse for the emotional care. As a student nurse, I should have acted in a more professional manner by asking for help from my faculty. I should have also talked with the assigned nurse to have a conversation with the client. Though, I was able to provide the emotional care to my patient, but I still felt that I could have done better if I knew how a nurse should behave in such situations. At the end of the day, what important is that how much your patient is content and relaxed when you give your time and care. I shared the whole scenario with my faculty. She appreciated my efforts even though I knew very little about it. She taught me what else I could have done. She also taught me about this subject that really enhanced my knowledge on this matter.

4. CONCLUSION

In the future, if I would encounter this situation, I will be more confident in providing care to the patient. I understood that a nurse should be compassionate in such matters. I would want to learn more about such matters. I would not hesitate in asking for help from my faculty and would not be scared if I would have to talk with the staff. I would develop compassion in myself as it is one of the qualities of a nurse because it helps us to put ourselves in their situation to assist them in the grieving process. This way I would be content and happy in my professional as well as in my personal life.

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