Nurses’ Knowledge and Attitude about the Elderly’s Sexuality

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Abstract. Aim: This purpose of research is to ascertain nurses’ knowledge level and attitudes about the sexuality of the elderly. Background: This research is a descriptive study. The objects were 231 nurses who have been working at general hospitals and long-term care hospitals in S, I City. Method: The data were analyzed with SPSS version 15.0. Frequency, percentage, average & standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA and Duncan method as a post-hoc were used. Result: The mean of the level of knowledge and attitude of nurses regarding sexuality of the elderly was 18.97±5.58, and 39.03±5.18 respectively. Conclusion: It is thought that efforts should be done not only on strengthening the academic curriculum of nursing related to the sexuality of the elderly at the school as nursing students university, but also on developing and applying the continuous systematic education module according to the level of the clinical nurses caring the elders by continuing education for improving their knowledge and attitude toward sexuality of the elderly.

Keywords: Nurse, elderly, sexuality, attitude, knowledge

1 Introduction

The ratio of the age over 65 years in the total population is expected to increase significantly to 2.5% in 2030, and 7.7% in 2050 from 0.9% in 2013 [1] . So, there is a necessity of discussion on the aging society and the elderly in terms of quality of life with the more comfortable and rewarding life of the elderly beyond the extension of lifespan simply, on considering concerns on the elderly [2] . On considering the fact that the healthy sexual life is the important element for the successful aging with physical health, the awareness and knowledge about the sexuality of the elderly should be considered and duly weighed [3, 4] . However, social point of view toward the sexuality of the elderly was distorted and innatural, although its im-
Importance, positive notion and concerns on the elderly’s quality of life have been stated [5].

Social atmosphere that they can’t easily discuss about the sexuality of the elderly and becoming covert of sexuality make increase the mobility of various STD (sex transmitted disease) and prostitution. And also, the need of counseling for sex education and sexual problem of the elderly is gradually increasing. However, there is few support system helping to discuss the concern on, solve worry about sexuality and express healthy sexuality with the proper perception and understanding [6].

Physicians, nurses and psychologists sometimes appear to ignore the sex-related questions of the elderly patients. This behavior was pointed out by the lack of knowledge and attitude related to the elderly patient’s sexual expression regardless of the health professionals’ prejudices and age [7, 8]. For the clinical nurses’ taking a role as an educator with relation to sexual health with holistic and whole life cyclic view point, there is a necessity to confirm the human responses related to sexuality and to intervene it with enough knowledge of and adequate attitude toward sexuality of the elderly.

2 Methods

2.1 Study Participants

The subjects were 231 nurses who have been working for general hospitals and long-term care hospitals in S, I City, using convenience sampling. Data were collected by self-report survey after approval from IRB at Hanyang University (HY-14-019-2) April, 10, 2014 to April, 30, 2014. The number of subjects was calculated by G-Power 3.1 Program, by setting the level of significance as ($\alpha = .05$), effective size .60, and statistical power (power) .85.

2.2 Design

This research is a cross-sectional descriptive study to ascertain knowledge level and attitude of nurses relevant to sexuality of the elderly and grasp correlations among them.

2.3 Instrument

The instrument for measuring sexual knowledge and attitude was ASKAS (Aging Sexual Knowledge and Attitude Scale) originally developed by White [9], and secondly revised by Quinn-Krach & Van Hoozer, and third, translated and supplemented by Kim [10] and finally remodified by Park & Park [11]. The items of
the instrument of Sexual knowledge were consisted of 29 items which score was from 0 to 1. The answer 'No' or 'do not know' was 0, 'Yes' 1. It was used after permission from Park& Park [11]. Sexual attitude was consisted of 11 items. The reliability of the Sexual knowledge and Sexual attitude, Cronbach's α was .85 and .76 respectively.

2.4 Data analysis

The data were analyzed with SPSS version 15.0. Frequency, percentage, average & standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA and Duncan method as a post-hoc were used.

3 Results

1. Female was 220 nurses (95.2%). The mean age was 38.22±10.22 and nurses at the age of 30’s were 72 (31.2%). Unmarried nurses were 43.7% and nurses who graduated from college were 131 (56.7%), and the average work experience was 9.50±7.92 years. There were 97 nurses (42.0%) having done with sexual education course in their college years, but 218 (94.4 %) nurses did not take any kinds of educational course related to sexuality.

2. The mean of knowledge level of nurses regarding sexuality of the elderly was 18.97±5.58. The mean of attitude of nurses regarding sexuality of the elderly was 39.03±5.18. <Table 1>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean ± SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual knowledge(0-29)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.97±5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual attitude (11-55)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39.03±5.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. There was no any meaningful difference in the knowledge level of the sexuality of the elderly according to the general characteristics. However, there was a statistically significant difference in attitude by gender only (t=3.13, p=.002).

4. There was a positive correlation between the nurses’ knowledge of and attitude to the sexuality of the elderly (r=.24, p <.001). <Table 2>
Table 2. Correlation between nurses' knowledge and attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sexual knowledge</th>
<th>Sexual Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.240 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Discussion

In this study, the nurses' knowledge level of the sexuality of the elderly was average 18.97±5.58. This score is lower than the average 19.2 of the nursing students [12]. On considering that the students have studied the course at their senior level, at the time when it passed 6-7 years after graduation, the nurses’ knowledge level of the elderly’s sexuality has not improved at all in compare to the level of students'. Based on this, it shows that the clinical nurses did not receive education related to sexuality of the elderly since then and their level of the knowledge of sexuality is not enough to do their role as a health professional caring for the elderly’s sexual health. Furthermore, it indicates that clinical nurses need the process of preparation for dealing with the elderly’s sexuality with adequate and enough knowledge on that.

The mean attitude of nurses regarding sexuality of the elderly was 39.03±5.18, which was higher than Kim’s 35.97±6.50(15-75) [10] studied 14 years ago. Especially, male nurses were more permissive than female nurses. This result was similar to that of Sultan’s et al. [13] research on Turkish doctors’ knowledge and attitude about the elderly’s sexuality, which shows that female doctor’s knowledge and attitude were lower than males and male doctors were more permissive and positive than female doctors toward the attitude to the elderly’s sexuality [13].

This results suggest that women have been oppressed and unsociable to the sexuality, especially for the women unlike men, who had officially or unofficially more liberal and permissive to the sexuality in compare to the women in general, under the influence of confucianistic value system rooted deeply in this Korean society for a long time. On considering the increase of elder’s interest and attention on the sexual life and STD prevalence rate among elderly population in an aging society, nurses caring elders in anywhere should be prepared so as to deal with and care the elders’ sexual needs and problems with adequate knowledge and positive attitude to the sexuality of the elders.

For this, firstly, adequate education program for improving the nurses’ knowledge and attitude about the elderly’s sexuality should be developed, and secondly nurses should be prepared properly by the education, encouraged to practice actively in the clinical setting and finally educate the elders, family and care providers including geriatric care workers.
5 Conclusion

The level of knowledge of nurses about sexuality of the elderly and the percentage of correct answers is slightly higher than medium. Level of knowledge of nurses about sexuality is slightly elevated than previous studies, but it did not increase significantly from the level of it at the college students. This implies that the level of knowledge of nurses about the elderly’s sexuality cannot be improved naturally as time goes on or by gaining more experience in clinical area.

In conclusion, systematic curriculum development at the college level and continuing education program for improving the level of the knowledge and attitude about the elderly’s sexuality are essential for nurses so as to assess the elderly’s responses related to sexuality including sexual needs and sexual problem such as STD and intervene to it adequately.

References