RESEARCH PAPER

POST-OPERATIVE PAIN ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT AMONG NURSES IN A TEACHING HOSPITAL IN ILE-IFE

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ABSTRACT

Millions of surgeries performed on patients are accompanied by some degree of pain. Successful outcome of any surgery is partly dependent on pre-, intra- and post-operative pain assessment and management. Nurses are professionally responsible for pain assessment and administration of analgesia, however, poor pain control has been one of patients' complaints traceable to poor assessment and management. This study was designed to assess nurses' knowledge and attitude about post-operative pain assessment and management in Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital complex Ile – Ife and Ilesha units. The study was a cross – sectional descriptive survey. The instrument was a validated self administered questionnaire developed by the researchers. Ninety – five nurses from the two units were purposively selected for the study. Data analysis was done with SPSS version 16. The result showed that 53.6% of the participants had poor knowledge of post operative pain assessment and management, while 46.4% had good knowledge. Only 30.5% had positive attitude towards pain assessment and management, while 69.5% had negative attitude. In view of this result, it is recommended that nurses upgrade their knowledge through continuing education. Hospital managers should establish standards and guidelines for assessing and managing post operative pain.

Key words: Post operative pain, Assessment, Management, Nurses.

INTRODUCTION

Millions of surgeries are performed on patients annually worldwide for various indications. These surgeries are accompanied by some degrees of pain. Surgical pains are real. It is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience resulting from actual or potential tissue damage. Successful outcome of any surgery is partly dependent on pre; - intra; and post operative pain assessment and management. Effective pain assessment and management is an integral part of nursing care.

There are many types of surgeries and with few exceptions, all are painful. Fear of uncontrolled pain is among the concerns of many patients who are about to undergo surgery (Wood, 2010; Sivrikaya, 2011). Pain can interfere with early recovery of surgical patients if not effectively controlled. Effective assessment of pain is key to effective control of pain.

Pain assessment can be inhibited by many factors (Wood, 2010). Such inhibiting factors include knowledge deficit, beliefs and attitude of health care providers, especially nurses who spend more time with the patients and professionally responsible for pain assessment and administration of analgesia. However, poor pain control has been

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one of the patients' complaints. Wood (2010) reported that post operative pain is poorly managed with up to 67% of patients experiencing unnecessary moderate to severe pain post operatively. The difficulties in managing patients with pain are compounded not only by knowledge deficit in pain assessment but also by attitudes of health care providers (Reed-Ash, 2008).

For effective post operative pain management, nurses need the knowledge, skills and the right attitude to be able to select appropriate assessment strategies and interventions. This study therefore, assesses nurses' knowledge and attitude about post-operative pain assessment and management at Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital complex, Ile – Ife and Ilesha, Osun State, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area: This study is a cross sectional descriptive survey conducted at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex, Ile-Ife and Ilesha, Osun State, Nigeria. These health institutions offer a wide range of health care services for various health problems including those that require surgeries. Various health professionals, including nurses, work in the institutions.

Ethical Consideration: Ethical approval was obtained from the ethical committee of the hospital for the conduct of the study. Participant's consent was also obtained after due explanation of the purpose of study.

Study Population: Ninety five (95) nurses – 79 from OAUTHC Ile-Ife and 16 from OAUTHC Ilesha were purposively selected for the study based on two inclusion criteria:-Two years post qualification experience; and at least 6 months work experience in surgical wards.

Instrument for Data Collection: A Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed after extensive literature review and has two sections. Section A assessed socio-demographic characteristics of the participants while section B assessed participants' knowledge and attitude about post-operative assessment and management. Section B comprised 16 items on knowledge of pain assessment and management, and 7 items on attitude.

Each item on knowledge was assigned 1 mark. A good knowledge of assessment and management was a score of 70% and above while poor knowledge was a score of less than 70%. This was because previous studies indicated that a 70% pass mark was satisfactory (Plaisance and Logan, 2006). The attitude was scored on a likert scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) =5; Agree (A) =4; Disagree (D) = 3; Strong Disagree (SD) = 2 and No Response (NR) = 1. A total score of 28-35 was considered positive attitude while scores below 28 was considered negative attitude.

Data Collection: Data were collected through five day period (Monday – Friday) to allow for coverage of the participants who were on shift duties. Questionnaires were distributed to eligible participants at various shifts. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion which accounted for high retrieval rate.

Data Analysis: Data analysis was done using a descriptive statistics of the statistical package for service solution (version 16). The completed questionnaire items were checked, coded, and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

RESULTS

The 95 (100%) copies of questionnaire administered were properly filled and considered fit for analysis. Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of participants. Eighty percent (80%) were females, and this is a reflection of female dominance in nursing profession. 49.5% were within the ages 21-30years. 70.5% had work experience of 1-5 years in surgical unit and 96.8% had only registered nurse/midwife certificate and while only 3.2% had first degree in Nursing. This is a reflection of nursing structure in Nigerian where there is rapid movement of nurses across units which do not allow for specialization.

The table 1 below showed that 49. 5% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 21-30; 30. 5% were within the age of 30-40 years. 15. 8% within the age of 41-50 years and 4. 2% within the age range of 51-60 years. 80% of the participants were females and 20% were males. 96.8% had only registered nurse/midwife certificate while only 2% had higher (B.NSC) educational qualification. Information on years of work experience in surgical ward showed that 70. % had 1-5 years experience, while 15.8% and 13.7% had greater than five years (> 5) and less than one year (<1) experience respectively. 43.2% of the participants were nursing officer II; 26.3% were nursing Officer I; 9.5% were senior nursing officers; 7.4% were principal nursing officers; 7.4% were chief nursing officers and 6.3% were Assistant Director Nursing Services.

Variable n=95	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)		
21 -30	47	49.5
31-40	29	30.5
41-50	15	15.8
51-60	4	4.2
Sex		
Male	19	20
Femal	76	80
Educational Qualification		
Rn/Rm	92	96.8
BnSc	3	3.2
Years of Experience in the Surgical ward		
<1	13	13.7
1-5	67	70.5
>5	15	15.8
Professional Qualification		
Nursing Officer II	41	43.2
Nursing Officer I	25	26.3
Senior Nursing Officer	9	9.5
Principal Nursing Officer	7	7.4
Chief Nursing Officer	7	7.4
Assistant director Nursing Services	6	6.3
Ethnic Group		
Yoruba	83	87.4
Ibo	12	12.6

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Table 2: Respondents' knowledge of post operative pain assessment and management

Knowledge level	Frequency	
	n	%
Good knowledge	44	46.4%
Poor knowledge	51	53.6%
Total	95	100

Table 2 above shows that 53.6% of the respondents had poor knowledge while 46.4% had good knowledge of post operative pain assessment and management, while table 3 below shows that 69.5% of the respondents negative attitude towards post operative assessment and management while 30.50% had positive attitude

Table 3: Respondents attitude towards post operative pain assessment and management.

Attitude	Frequency	
	N	%
Positive	29	30.5
Negative	66	69.5
Total	95	100

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DISCUSSION

The results of this study have shown that respondents demonstrated poor knowledge in post- operative pain assessment and management as only 46.4% of the respondents demonstrated good knowledge. The result is also consistent with the results of previous studies on Nurses' knowledge of pain assessment and use of assessment tools. According to Pule-McColl et al. (2001) nurses require increased knowledge and skills in the area of pain management.

In a similar study by Rieman *et al*. (2007), nurses were found not to use consistently current guidelines and standards available for pain management. Regarding the respondents attitude to post operative pain assessment and management, they demonstrated negative attitude as evident in Table 3. This could be a reflection of understaffing and excess workload which does not give room for quality nursing care (Taylor 2010), and also the gap between theory and practice as reported by Stellenberg and Bruce (2007).

Nurses' negative attitude may interfere with the care outcomes of surgical patients causing prolonged hospital stay and increased hospital bills.   The previous and present studies indicated that nurses' knowledge of post operative pain assessment and management is poor. This may be due to a deficiency in the nursing curricular. One would have expected a better performance since majority were relatively new from school. This result calls for urgent review of the nursing care policy of surgical patients. Standards and guidelines in post operative pain assessment and management should be established and strictly followed. Nurses' attitude can be improved upon through continuing education, and efforts to resolve the challenges of understaffing and excess work load.

In conclusion, Nurses in this study demonstrated poor knowledge and negative attitude towards post operative pain assessment and management and this may be true of other nurses in Nigeria. Hospital managers should establish standards and guidelines for assessing and managing post operative pain. This will ensure effective care and ensure positive patient outcomes. Nurses should endeavour to upgrade their knowledge through continuing education inform of seminars and conferences.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Famakinwa T. T. conceptualized the study and participated actively in literature review and study design. Oyeniran Y.A. participated actively in literature review and data collection. Bello B.G. was involved in data collection.