

ICOHN&ACOHN Joint Conference 2010/ Aug 6th , Yokohama / O- I -13



Occupational Mental Health and Nursing

*the core competencies of nurses
in supporting mentally disordered workers today*

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Background

- The presenter(TS) is a consultant psychiatrist specialized for occupational health.
- My colleague (KA) is a veteran registered nurse (RN) of occupational health .
- We experienced a case of occupational discrimination to prohibit the nurse doing health guidance to company workers by reason of not bearing the title of public health nurse(PHN). : finally, the nurse quit her job.
- In Japan, only PHN has the legal authority to perform health guidance to patients.

Public Health Nurse

- In Japanese word: **Hoken-shi**
- One of the advanced nursing practices in Japan : senior national qualification of RN.
- The Act on Public Health Nurses, Midwives and Nurses of Japan defines PHN as those who perform health guidance licenced by the Minister of Health ,Labor and Welfare.
- But health guidance itself is not exclusive service of PHN.
- PHN can practice not only health guidance but also nursing as a whole.
- So what is the reason for existence of the qualification “PHN”? In fact, there is no distinction of practice between RN and PHN in occupational health.

Queries

- What reason can justify **dumping RNs from occupational health?**
- Why RNs are not legally qualified for health guidance?
- What capability is needed to execute the task of occupational health?

Answers

- Banishing RNs from occupational health is unfair on the ground
 - there is **no clearly-stated law to prohibit** doing health guidance other than PHN.
- But.....
 - What is the core competency to make good jobs in occupational health ?
 - particularly of workplace mental health
 - What is the core rigidity to occupational health ?

Core competency

- Fundamental knowledge or expertise in a specific subject area .
 - not easily imitable for the followers or rivals
 - Adding value for customers(patients, company employees)
 - core competency(best is not mere competency(minimum skill))
 - **antonym: core rigidity**
- What is the core competencies in occupational health nursing?
 - in particular, occupational mental health?

literature search

- free word search, “occupational health” AND “core competencies” and then hand-searched
 - PubMed retrieved 3 articles.
 - EBSCO host Academic Search Premier retrieved 55 articles and none of them were related to our theme.
 - ScienceDirect retrieved 98 articles and none of them were related to our theme.
 - ProQuest retrieved 24 articles and none of them were related to our theme.
 - Ichushi Web (Japanese database for medical sciences) retrieved 12 articles and none of them were related to our theme.

Summary of review of literatures

- There are many literature on competencies (**not core competency**) of occupational health workers which include.....
 - The need for clinical expertise or knowledge in
 - relationship environmental exposure and diseases.
 - good communication with patients , doctors, stakeholders and other allied health professions.
 - deep knowledge of related rules or laws.
 - surveying health hazards.
 - implement health promotion programme
 - ethical behavior
- But there is no specific description on **core competency** in **occupational mental health nursing**.

core competency in occupational mental health nursing

- meaning : skills and attitudes of **nurse of excellence** in occupational mental health which is not easily acquirable
 1. Ability to perform brief psychological supports
 2. Practical knowledge of social security , company regulation and the Occupational Health and Safety Law of Japan
 3. Mediation skills toward conflicts arisen between sick employees and stakeholders: because **nurses are neutral**.

In occupational mental health nursing, nurses should act more independently and flexibly along with circumstances.

How to acquire the core competency in occupational mental health nursing

- Presence during consultation of doctors specialized in occupational mental health.
- listen to mentally sick employees with their problems **independently** of the doctors.
- briefing to the doctors before their consultation to mentally suffered employees and relevant people.
- Mediate between employees and relevant people as needed: you are **the coordinators**.
- Of course, you must learn profoundly.....
 - general psychiatry , laws related occupational health, psychotherapy(such as person centered approach by Carl Ramson Rogers)

Discussions & Conclusions

1. Health guidance is no-exclusive job of public health nurse.
2. Health guidance form only small part of occupational health nursing.
3. Today in Japan, need of support to mentally-suffered workers in occupational health is mounting.
4. Occupational mental health nursing requires cooperative but autonomous nurses.

Nursing in occupational mental health should be placed as clinical nurse specialist modality.

Occupational mental health nurse is a newly emerged “profession”.

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