

Exploration of Ethical Issues in Operating Room Nursing

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Abstract: Operating room nursing ethics is an important component of medical ethics and has a significant impact on operating room work. In the unique and critical environment of the operating room, nursing staff not only need to possess solid professional skills to handle various complex surgical situations but must also uphold noble professional ethics, always keeping the patient at the center and wholeheartedly providing high-quality services. This requires nurses to prioritize patient safety, respect patients' rights, and address their needs in daily work, using professional skills and considerate care to earn patients' trust and provide a solid foundation for the efficient and safe operation of the operating room.

Keywords: Operating room; nursing; ethics

Introduction

Operating room nursing is the core of hospital medical services, and its ethical issues relate to patient safety, medical quality, and doctor-patient relationships. This article discusses the importance of operating room nursing ethics and its specific manifestations at different stages. In the preoperative preparation phase, attention is focused on the ethical issues of the formalization of informed consent and the misunderstandings of patients. During the intraoperative stage, emphasis is placed on strict aseptic techniques, individualized pain management, awareness of organ protection, and the ethical requirements for handling emergencies. In the postoperative recovery phase, the focus is on ethical care such as rehabilitation guidance, psychological

support, and protecting patient privacy. By practicing these ethical principles and requirements, the quality of operating room nursing can be improved, patients' rights can be protected, and harmonious doctor-patient relationships can be promoted.

1. Overview of Operating Room Nursing Ethics

Operating room nursing ethics, as an indispensable part of medical ethics, plays a crucial role throughout the entire nursing process. In the unique and critically important work environment of the operating room, the significance of nursing ethics becomes particularly evident. It not only concerns the safety of patients' lives but also directly reflects the moral standards of the entire medical field. From the moment a



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patient enters the operating room until the successful completion of surgery and transition to the recovery phase, nursing ethics consistently permeates every aspect, exerting a profound influence on every detail. In this highly specialized and high-risk field, nursing staff face a multitude of challenges. Therefore, they must possess not only solid professional skills and keen observational abilities to respond quickly to various emergencies but also exemplary professional ethics and profound ethical literacy^[1]. This requires that, in their work, nurses prioritize patients' safety at all times, adopt a patient-centered approach, and dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to serving them. Whether in preoperative preparations, the intense intraoperative processes, or meticulous postoperative care, nursing staff must demonstrate a high degree of responsibility and professionalism to ensure that patients receive the highest quality of care.

2. Ethical Issues in the Preoperative Preparation Stage

2.1 Formalization of Informed Consent

In the preoperative preparation stage, the signing of the informed consent form is a crucial step in ensuring the patient's right to be informed and their autonomy. However, in practice, the signing of the informed consent form can sometimes become overly formalized, losing its true meaning. This formalization may manifest in situations where medical staff merely ask the patient to sign the consent form without providing a detailed explanation of the surgery's purpose, methods, risks, and expected outcomes; or the patient, due to urgent medical conditions or unbearable pain, hastily signs the consent form without fully understanding its content. Such a formalized approach to signing the consent form severely violates the ethical principles of informed consent. Informed consent not only requires that the patient understand the relevant information about the surgery but also that the patient voluntarily makes a decision based on a full understanding of that information. If the patient signs the consent form without truly understanding its content, their decision may not stem from genuine autonomy but rather be influenced by external pressures or misunderstandings. In such cases, even if the surgery is successful, unnecessary disputes and conflicts may arise due to the patient's lack of understanding of the surgical process

and outcomes.

2.2 Patient Understanding Bias

In the medical field, there is a clear information asymmetry between patients and healthcare providers due to the specialized and complex nature of medical knowledge. This information asymmetry often leads to a distortion in patients' understanding of their condition and the proposed surgical plan. The root causes of this understanding bias can be attributed to two main factors: first, patients' limited medical knowledge, which makes it difficult for them to fully and accurately comprehend the professional information provided by healthcare workers; and second, healthcare workers' insufficiently clear or detailed explanations, which fail to convey complex medical knowledge in a way that is simple and easy for patients to understand. The consequences of patient understanding bias are serious. When patients misunderstand or only partially understand the information, they may make decisions that are not optimal, potentially leading to negative health outcomes. For example, a patient may refuse a necessary surgery due to a misunderstanding of the risks, or they may develop unrealistic expectations about the surgery's outcomes, leading to post-operative disappointment and dissatisfaction.

3. Ethical Requirements in the Intraoperative Process

3.1 Strict Aseptic Technique

The surgical team must strictly follow aseptic protocols during the surgery, as this is a fundamental requirement for preventing surgical infections and ensuring patient safety. To achieve this goal, the surgical team must implement a series of measures: (1) All personnel involved in the surgery must perform thorough hand disinfection and wear sterile surgical gowns and gloves. These items not only effectively isolate the healthcare workers from direct contact with the patient but also prevent microbial contamination of the surgical area by the healthcare workers themselves. (2) All instruments and dressings used during the surgery must undergo strict sterilization to ensure their sterility^[2]. (3) The cleanliness and sterility of the operating room environment are also crucial. Although most operating rooms are now laminar flow operating rooms, which ensure constant temperature and humidity, and the air must be filtered and disinfected to remove

microorganisms and dust from the air, the floors, walls, and ceilings of the operating room must also be regularly cleaned and disinfected to prevent microbial growth in these areas.

3.2 Personalized Pain Management

Pain is one of the primary concerns for patients and their families during surgical procedures. Effective pain management not only alleviates the patient's suffering and anxiety but also enhances the success of the surgery and the quality of postoperative recovery. Therefore, the surgical team should formulate a personalized pain management strategy tailored to the patient's specific circumstances. Personalized pain management should take into account various factors, including the patient's age, gender, medical condition, type of surgery, and individual tolerance to pain. For instance, elderly or pediatric patients require more detailed and customized pain management plans due to their unique physiological characteristics and pain perception. When selecting analgesic medications and pain management methods, the surgical team should balance the patient's specific needs with the surgical requirements. The choice of analgesics should consider their efficacy, potential side effects, and the patient's history of allergies. Pain management methods can be chosen based on factors such as the surgical site, duration of the procedure, and the severity of the patient's pain, including options like local anesthesia, general anesthesia, or continuous analgesia. Furthermore, personalized pain management requires real-time adjustments based on the patient's pain response during the surgery. The surgical team should closely monitor the patient's vital signs and expressions of pain, promptly evaluating the effectiveness of the analgesia. Adjustments to the dosage and timing of analgesic administration should be made according to the patient's feedback and pain intensity.

3.3 Awareness of Organ Protection

In the intricate and complex process of surgery, awareness of organ protection is a crucial competency for the surgical team. Surgery not only requires the precise removal of pathological tissues but also demands the maximal preservation of the function and structural integrity of surrounding normal organs. Developing a strong awareness of organ protection is essential for the surgical team and involves a deep

understanding of the anatomy and physiological functions of various organs. Before surgery, team members should thoroughly review the patient's medical history and imaging data, carefully analyze the surgical site, and identify critical organs that may be affected. This allows for precise planning of the surgical pathway and minimizes risks to essential organs. During the surgical procedure, the team must maintain a high level of vigilance and focus. Each step of the operation should be performed with caution and precision to avoid unnecessary tissue damage or organ strain. For vital organs such as the heart, lungs, and liver, special care must be taken to preserve their function and structural integrity. When dissecting, cutting, or suturing tissues, it is essential to ensure that these actions do not harm adjacent organs or impair their normal function. Additionally, the surgical team should prioritize the prevention of intraoperative complications. For potential complications, such as bleeding or infection, proactive measures should be established in advance. This comprehensive approach ensures optimal surgical outcomes while safeguarding the patient's overall health and organ function.

3.4 Emergency Response

Despite thorough preparation and planning by the surgical team prior to the procedure, emergencies may still occur during surgery. These emergencies can arise from sudden changes in the patient's condition, the complexity of surgical maneuvers, or equipment failures. Consequently, it is essential for the surgical team to develop and rehearse emergency response plans to ensure rapid and effective action in such situations. The formulation of emergency plans should be based on potential scenarios during surgery, including but not limited to massive hemorrhage, organ injury, and anesthesia complications. These plans must clearly define the procedures for identifying, evaluating, managing, and documenting various emergencies, along with the roles and collaborative approaches of the surgical team^[3]. In the event of an emergency, surgical team members must respond swiftly and work in close coordination to tackle the challenges. Effective communication and collaboration among team members are crucial to ensure the accurate transmission and sharing of information. Additionally, the surgical team should remain calm and composed,

making decisive and well-informed decisions based on the emergency plan and the specific circumstances of the patient.

4. Ethical Care During the Postoperative Recovery Period

4.1 Rehabilitation Guidance

Rehabilitation guidance plays a pivotal role in the ethical care provided during the postoperative recovery period. In the critical phase of functional exercise, healthcare professionals focus on the patient's surgical site and rehabilitation needs to meticulously design exercise regimens. Leveraging their expertise, they carefully guide patients in performing appropriate physical exercises aimed at promoting wound healing, enhancing muscle strength, and improving joint mobility. To maximize the effectiveness of rehabilitation, healthcare professionals regularly assess the patient's progress and adjust the rehabilitation plan flexibly based on the patient's actual condition. Dietary adjustments are equally important. Healthcare professionals develop personalized dietary plans tailored to the patient's nutritional needs and postoperative dietary restrictions. They emphasize balanced meals to ensure adequate nutrient intake, thereby supporting the patient's rapid recovery. Moreover, healthcare professionals pay close attention to the patient's dietary habits and preferences, striving to meet nutritional requirements while enhancing the enjoyment and acceptability of meals. This thoughtful approach allows patients to experience both the benefits of proper nutrition and the warmth of attentive care from the healthcare team.

4.2 Psychological Support

Postoperative patients may experience anxiety and fear due to various factors, such as pain, concerns about recovery outcomes, and changes in lifestyle. Healthcare professionals should fully recognize the importance of psychological support and provide sufficient care and encouragement to patients.

(1) Healthcare professionals need to listen to patients' concerns and understand their inner worries and doubts. Through patient and attentive listening, healthcare professionals can gain a deeper understanding of the patient's psychological state, providing a basis for subsequent psychological support. During this process, they should demonstrate empathy, ensuring that

patients feel understood and cared for.

(2) Healthcare professionals should alleviate patients' psychological stress and boost their confidence in recovery through comfort and encouragement. A kind word or an encouraging look can become a source of strength for patients to overcome difficulties. Using positive language and attitudes, healthcare professionals can help patients build confidence in fighting their illness.

(3) Healthcare professionals should closely monitor patients' emotional changes and promptly address any potential psychological issues, such as depression or anxiety. If signs of psychological problems are detected, timely intervention should be carried out. By providing professional psychological counseling and treatment, healthcare professionals can help patients overcome mental challenges and maintain a positive and optimistic mindset^[4].

4.3 Protection of Patient Privacy Rights

During the postoperative recovery period, protecting patient privacy is an ethical principle that healthcare professionals must strictly adhere to. Patients' personal information and medical records are considered private, and healthcare professionals have an obligation to maintain confidentiality and prevent unauthorized disclosure. In the course of nursing care, healthcare professionals should pay particular attention to protecting the patient's private areas and personal information. For example, during examinations or treatments, the patient's body should be appropriately covered; discussions about the patient's condition should be avoided in public places. These seemingly minor actions are, in fact, a way to show respect for and protect the patient's personal dignity. Protecting patient privacy is not only a sign of respect for the individual but also an important safeguard for maintaining a harmonious doctor-patient relationship. If a patient's privacy rights are violated, it may lead to distrust towards healthcare professionals, which can negatively impact communication and cooperation between the doctor and patient, ultimately affecting the patient's recovery outcomes. Therefore, healthcare professionals must remain vigilant at all times to ensure that patients' privacy rights are not infringed upon during the provision of medical services. Additionally, the medical team should strengthen education and

training on patient privacy protection, enhancing the team's awareness and ability to protect patient privacy.

Conclusion

In summary, ethical practices in the operating room are of paramount importance in healthcare nursing. Nursing ethics not only serve as guidelines that nursing staff must follow but also provide essential protection to ensure that patients receive safe, high-quality, and compassionate care. By continuously enhancing ethical education and training, and improving the ethical standards and professional integrity of nursing staff, we can provide more thoughtful and attentive care to patients. This also helps to establish a stronger trust bridge between healthcare providers and patients, further promoting the harmonious development of the medical profession. Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on the development and practice of operating room nursing ethics, striving to create a more warm and secure medical environment for patients.

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