

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance of the Research Problem

Advanced technology and the impact of social, political, and economic factors have stimulated increasing attention paid to the ethical dimension of health care practice (Gold, Chambers, & Dvorak, 1995). Also, the increasing complexity of nursing practice often makes nurses face stressful ethical dilemmas. These ethical dilemmas have occurred because of changes in health care delivery, different perceptions between personal values, morals, opinions, professional responsibilities and relationships, and the nurse's role as patient/family advocate (Candela, Michael, & Mitchell, 2003; Erlen & Sereika, 1997). Thus, for the reasons above, ethical dilemmas in nursing practice have become even more complex than in the past (Weiner, Tabak, & Bergman, 2003).

Psychiatric nursing practice is more frequently faced with ethical dilemmas than other areas (Sturm, 2004). Within psychiatric nursing practice, ethical dilemmas arise frequently and these present a challenge for psychiatric nurses. This challenge can also give rise to conflict when psychiatric nurses are torn between respecting autonomy, doing good, and avoiding paternalism (Monaghan & Begley, 2004). Stuart and Laraia (2001) claimed that mental health nurses frequently faced ethical dilemmas such as freedom of choice vs. coercion, helping vs. imposing values, and maintaining patient confidentiality vs. protecting the potential victim. Another dilemma faced by mental health nurses is the use of restraint of the mentally ill patient

because restraint has a direct conflict with the concept of autonomy (Hannigan & Cutcliffe, 2002; Strumpf & Evans, 1991).

A study conducted by Forchuk (1991) found various ethical problems encountered by mental health nurses such as the issue of doing good, respect for autonomy, maintaining patient confidentiality, avoiding deception, preventing killing, and staff conflicts, both intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary. Davis, Aroskar, Liaschenko, and Drought (1997) reported that mental health nurses frequently encounter ethical dilemmas of respect for autonomy and the right to self-determination. The resulting ethical dilemma involved choices between two equally unsatisfactory alternatives, neither of which would generate a satisfactory solution: to hold and try to treat the patient against his will, or to release a potentially dangerous individual back into society.

Similar to psychiatric nurses, nursing students usually face ethical dilemmas inevitably while caring for patients with mental illness. Balevre (2001) reported that health care providers including mental health nursing students frequently encounter ethical dilemmas of respect for autonomy and the right to self-determination in providing care for patients with mental illness.

When a nursing student inadvertently corners a patient during an interaction, the patient has difficulty leaving the interaction and may feel compelled to respond violently. It was also reported by Echemnach (1999), that nursing students frequently face ethical dilemmas while providing care for patients with aggressive behavior. The findings revealed that nursing students not only have to provide good nursing care to the patient, but they also have to protect themselves when a patient is potentially violence towards them. Another study conducted by Hayward and Weber

(2003) showed that nursing students frequently faced ethical dilemmas in working with mental health people. The investigation suggested that ethical dilemmas faced by nursing students concerning issues of confidentiality, the role of advocacy, and respect for patient autonomy. One of the difficulties faced by nursing students is that patients with mental health disorders usually cannot speak for themselves and they are unable to make their own choices.

Despite the fact that most reviewed articles related to nurses, nevertheless, few papers related to student nurses, who also face ethical dilemmas. And when nursing students face ethical dilemmas, they often experience greater difficulty such as unhappiness, fear, and anxiety. Moreover, they might feel confused when faced with conflicts, suffering, and stress in caring for mentally ill patients because of their status as students, less experience, and low confidence. Besides, psychiatric practice is a new experience for inexperienced nursing students. Thereby, this situation can lead to negative values in psychiatric nursing in the future (Granskar, Edberg, & Fridlund, 2001; Landeen, Byrne, & Brown, 1995).

Nursing students are required to make decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas in providing care for patients with mental illness. Nursing students realize that ethical decision making is an effective strategy to resolve ethical dilemmas (Han & Ahn, 2000). This fact is clearly illustrated in a research study by Swider, McElmurry, and Yarling (1985) in which about 60% of the students made decisions based on the bureaucratic-centered model, 19% based their decisions on the physician-centered model, and only 9% made decisions based on the patient-centered model. Thereby, making decisions based on these ethical decision models can bring

nursing to the process of proclivity toward selecting choices of action that are in line with their professional roles, practical experience, motivation, and attitudes.

Furthermore, being a professional nurse requires ethical decision making and ethics education in order to prepare them for such issues. The ethics teaching in nursing education has become increasingly important to train nursing students to participate in decision making (Dinc & Gorgulu, 2002). For the reasons stated above, nursing students must be taught to make ethical decisions more effectively when they deal with ethical dilemmas to improve quality of care for patients with mental illness.

In the Diploma III Nursing Program in North Sumatra, the concept of ethical dilemmas and ethical decision-making are offered for nursing students in a course of nursing ethics in the second semester of the first academic year (National Curriculum for Diploma III Nursing Program, 1999). So far, the teaching method/strategy has not yet used cases based on experience in clinical practice, especially with regard to providing care for patients with mental illness. Ethics education offered for the nursing students seems to be too general and ineffective (National Curriculum for Diploma III Nursing Program, 1999).

Studies on ethical dilemmas of nursing students in nursing practice (Chaowalit, Sutharangsee, & Takviriyannun, 1999; Park, Cameron, Han, Ahn, Oh, & Kim, 2003), and ethical decision making of nursing students (Chaowalit et al., 2004; Han & Ahn, 2000; Yung, 1997), have been conducted in developing countries. From literature reviewed during the past ten years, only a few studies about ethical dilemmas conducted in Indonesia were found. Setiawan (2002) identified five themes of ethical dilemmas experienced by nurses in intensive care units in Medan. Moreover, Pujiastuti (2004) conducted a study to investigate the ethical dilemmas and

resolutions in clinical practice encountered by nursing students in Health Polytechnic Semarang. However, the study was not specific to mental health/psychiatric nursing.

Therefore, it is important to conduct a study on ethical dilemmas and ethical decision making of nursing students in providing care for patients with mental illness. In this study, these issues will therefore be studied, particularly in North Sumatra province, Indonesia. The study will provide beneficial information that will be used for both nursing ethics in nursing practice and ethics education. The improvement of the quality of ethics education, in this case, will be through understanding of the ethical dilemmas and ethical decision making among nursing students in providing care for patients with mental illness.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the frequency of ethical dilemmas in providing care for patients with mental illness encountered by nursing students in Diploma III Nursing Program in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia.

2. To identify the level of disturbance by ethical dilemmas in providing care for patients with mental illness of nursing students in Diploma III Nursing Program in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia.

3. To examine the frequency of ethical decision making of nursing students based on the patient-centered, the physician-centered, and the bureaucratic-centered models in providing care for patients with mental illness.

Research Questions

1. How frequently are ethical dilemmas in providing care for patients with mental illness encountered by nursing students in Diploma III Nursing Program in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia?
2. To what levels are nursing students disturbed by ethical dilemmas in providing care for patients with mental illness?
3. How frequently are nursing students involved in ethical decision-making based on the patient-centered, the physician-centered, and the bureaucratic-centered models, when providing care for patients with mental illness?

Conceptual Framework

This study aimed to identify the frequency of ethical dilemmas and the level of disturbance by ethical dilemmas and to examine the frequency of ethical decision making of nursing students in providing care for patients with mental illness. The conceptual framework of this study was constructed based on four ethical dilemmas of nursing students which the researcher formulated from various literatures (Barloon, 2003; Beauchamp & Childres, 2001; Fontaine, 2003; Forchuk, 1991; Gates, 1995; Gibson, 1997; Granskar, Edberg, & Fridlund, 2001; Latvala, Janhonen, and Moring, 1998; Merlose & Shapiro, 1999; McDaniel and Erlen, 1996; Perese, 1996; Pujiastuti, 2004; Stuart & Laraia, 2001). The four ethical dilemmas of this study included: (1) respect for autonomy vs. doing good for patients/others, (2) professional obligation vs. protecting oneself from risk, (3) advocating for patients vs. lack of authority and (4) intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary conflicts.

Respect for autonomy vs. doing good for patients/others is a conflict that is usually faced by nursing students when they encounter mentally ill patients in clinical practice. Conflicts sometimes arise in the team regarding what the patient is allowed to determine by her/himself (medication, leaves of absence and special treatment). Besides these issues, nursing students are faced daily with ethical issues such as coercion, seclusion, using restraint, and handling patients who refuse medication or treatment. Nevertheless, nursing students want to do good for patients/others and respect for the patient autonomy. But, they have low confidence in their own ability to help patients who struggle with mental illness (Melrose & Shapiro, 1999).

Professional obligation vs. protecting oneself from risk is a conflict of each nursing student when encounters with mentally ill patients in psychiatric hospital. Professional obligation vs. protecting oneself from risk occurs when nursing students have conflict in their responsibility to the patients. As future nurses they have responsibility to provide good quality of nursing care to mentally ill patients, particularly with acute episode of mentally ill patients. At the same time, nursing students also have the duty to protect themselves from risk (Carlsson, Dahlberg, & Drew, 2000; Catalano, 2003; Mohr, 2003).

Advocating for patients vs. lack of authority becomes an ethical dilemma when nursing students use the role of advocacy in providing care for mentally ill patients. They frequently face conflicting interests when acting as patient advocate (Gates, 1995).

Intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary conflicts occurs when nursing students have conflicts with other students or nurses (intradisciplinary conflicts) and

physicians (interdisciplinary conflicts) in providing care for patients with mental illness (Melrose & Shapiro. 1999; Perese, 1996).

When nursing students are confronted with ethical dilemmas, which often present a certain degree of risk and uncertainty, they have tried to find the best solution in resolving a dilemma by ethical decision making. In this study, the researcher will use three models of ethical decision making proposed by Murphy, (1984), and Swider, McElmurry, and Yarling, (1985). The models of decision making in this study include: (1) the patient-centered model, (2) the physician-centered model, and (3) the bureaucratic-centered model.

These models are classified as follows:

(1) The patient-centered model: This model reflects the responsibility of nursing to the patient/family. In this model, nurses realize that their main responsibility for the patient with disabilities and action as patient advocator.

(2) The physician-centered model: This model reflects the responsibility of nursing to a physician's attitudes or authority, or that of the medical community. The nurse's duty is to instill confidence in the doctor-patient relationship.

(3) The bureaucratic-centered model: This model reflects the responsibility of nursing to the authority of the hospital or the institutional system that employed the nurse. Nurses should not create any troubles with their institution.

Definition of Terms

An ethical dilemma is the situation that students experience and realize that it is dilemma. Ethical dilemmas in this study consisted of (1) respect for autonomy vs. doing good for patients/others, (2) professional obligation vs. protecting oneself from

risk. (3) advocating for patients vs. lack of authority and (4) intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary conflicts. These ethical dilemmas were measured by the Ethical Dilemmas Questionnaire developed by the researcher to measure frequency of ethical dilemmas and the level of disturbance by such ethical dilemmas.

Ethical decision making is an action that nursing students choose to deal with ethical dilemmas based on three models of decision making proposed by Murphy (1984) and Swider, McElmurry, and Yarling (1985): (1) the patient-centered model, (2) the physician-centered model, and (3) the bureaucratic-centered model. Ethical decision making in this study was measured by an instrument modified by the researcher based on the studies of Chaowalit, Suttharangsee, Nasae, Petpichetchian, Intrasombat, and Khampalikit (2004), literature reviews, and focus group interviews with nursing students in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia.

Significances of the Study

This study can contribute to nursing education and further research.

1. For nursing education, the study can be used as baseline data for nurse educators to develop ethics courses, to better prepare nursing students, and to deal with ethical dilemmas more effectively. Additionally, nurse educators can provide experience for nursing students with appropriate ethical decision making in clinical practice.

2. For nursing research, the study can be used for further research to explore deeply the ethical dilemmas regarding nurses and nursing students in providing care for patients with mental illness.