

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A descriptive comparative study was designed to describe and examine differences in nurses' and patients' perceptions about of patients' information needs during perioperative care. This study was conducted at the largest referral hospital on the East Coast of Malaysia. Subjects were recruited using purposive sampling from ten surgical wards in three specialties: general surgery, orthopedic surgery, and obstetric and gynecology surgery. One hundred surgical patients and 130 surgical nurses participated in the study. Data were collected from March 2005–July 2005, using self-report questionnaires. Subjects were asked to respond to two sets of questionnaires: one set was for patients (Form 1) and another for nurses (Form 2). Each questionnaire consisted of two parts: 1) demographic characteristics, and 2) patients' information needs in perioperative care. Five experts tested the content validity of both instruments and the reliability was .93 and .95, respectively. The data gathered were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 11.5.

In this chapter, the presentations are as follows: summary of study findings, strengths and limitations, and implications and recommendations.

Summary of the Study Findings

Subjects involved in this study were 100 surgical patients and 130 surgical nurses from ten surgical wards. Surgical patients ages ranged from 18 to 70 years. Most patients (46%) were from obstetric and gynecology surgery. More than half were having their first surgical experience. Forty-two percent of the patients underwent laparotomy. Surgical nurses ages ranged from 22 to 52 years. Most nurses were in the young and middle-adult age groups. They had an average of eight years experience in surgical nursing.

Both groups perceived moderate to high levels of needs for providing information to patients during perioperative care. Mean scores given by surgical patients were lower than those given by surgical nurses. The independent *t*-test analysis was used to test the differences between patients' and nurses' perceptions of patients' information needs in this study. The findings indicate that patients' information needs during perioperative care as perceived by patients and nurses were not significantly different ($t = -.97, p > .05$).

However, there were significant differences in two dimensions in the preoperative phase - sensation-discomfort information ($t = -3.17, p < .01$), and patients' role information ($t = -2.25, p < .05$), four dimensions at the intraoperative phase - situational or procedural information ($t = 2.13, p < .05$), sensation-discomfort information ($t = -3.26, p < .01$), patients' role information ($t = -2.18, p < .05$), and psychosocial support information ($t = 3.98, p < .01$), and one dimension at the postoperative phase - situational or procedural ($t = 2.14, p < .05$). There were no significant differences in the remaining three dimensions in the preoperative phase, and three dimensions in the postoperative phase.

The specific findings on patients' information needs at the three phases are:

Preoperative Phase

In the preoperative phase, patients gave highest ratings to 1) situational or procedural information, followed by 2) patients' role information, 3) psychosocial support information, 4) skills training information, and 5) sensation-discomfort information. Nurses gave highest ratings to 1) situational or procedural information, followed by 2) patients' role information, 3) skills training information, 4) psychosocial support information, and 5) sensation-discomfort information.

Intraoperative Phase

In the intraoperative phase, patients gave high scores to patients' need for 1) situational or procedural information, followed by 2) psychosocial support information, 3) patients' role information and 4) sensation-discomfort information. Nurses gave high scores to patients' need for 1) patients' role information, followed by 2) situational or procedural information, 3) psychosocial support information, and 4) sensation-discomfort information.

Postoperative Phase

In the postoperative phase, patients and nurses similarly gave highest ratings to the need for 1) patients' role information, followed by 2) situational or procedural information, 3) skills training information, and 4) sensation-discomfort information.

In general, patients and nurses perceived high level of needs for patients' information in perioperative care. The findings suggest that nurses need to emphasize patients' needs, especially in the intraoperative phase. Nurses need to assess and provide the information according to patients' perceptions of needs. By doing this, nurses can enhance quality of nursing care for surgical patients.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this study include:

1. It was conducted in surgical patients and surgical nurses belonging to a single ethnic group, Malaysian. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of patients' information needs before surgery. The findings also provide a strong foundation for the development of guidelines for preoperative teaching in surgical wards. These represent patients' and nurses' view of patients' information needs during perioperative care.

2. The researcher collected the data alone. This serves a consistent way to approach subjects and ensures subjects' understanding of the questions. Subjects could directly approach the researcher if they had any problems in answering the questionnaires.

3. The instruments used were translated into Malay language. This enhanced overall ability of study subjects to understand the questionnaires.

This study also has some limitations:

1. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to recruit the subjects. The findings may not be representative of the surgical patients and surgical nurses. The findings cannot be generalized to all nursing situations, ethnic groups, or people of other religions. In addition, more female patients were recruited in this study. The findings can be applied to surgical patients and nurses who are Malay, Muslim, and female.

2. The lengthy questionnaire and patients' conditions might have influenced patients in completion of the questionnaire. Patients needed a long time to complete the questionnaire since there were 50 items. In addition, patients requested the questionnaires be left with them. Consequently, it might have influenced the patients' responses.

3. The results of this study show non-significant difference between patients' and nurses' perceptions of patients' information needs during perioperative care. There were also significant differences and non-significant differences in several dimensions at three phases of perioperative care. These findings need to be interpreted cautiously because of the low statistical power of the study. During the data collection period there were situational factors that contributed to the limited number of patients recruited.

Implications and Recommendations

Nursing Practice

1. The findings of the study provide evidence for clinical practice. The results

were from the patients' and nurses' own views of patients' information needs in perioperative care.

2. Nurses need to provide the information to surgical patients according to the patients' own perceptions of information needs in the three phases of perioperative care.

2.1 In the preoperative phase, patients' need information on 1) situational or procedural, 2) patients role information, and 3) psychosocial support information. Patients wanted to know more about surgery and anesthesia during this phase. Nurses need to emphasize that patients received detailed and clear information about surgery from their doctor. With this information patients understand clearly and perform their role effectively. In the area of psychosocial support, nurses must communicate information about the surgical procedure to patients and family members. Nurses need to ensure family members are nearby so that the patient can meet them immediately after surgery is over.

2.2 In the intraoperative phase, patients wanted information on 1) situational or procedural information, 2) psychosocial support information, and 3) patients' role information. This suggests that nurses need to continuously inform patients about surgery and related experiences throughout the entire perioperative period. Patients wanted their families to be informed regarding the progress of surgery while the families waited outside the operating room. They also wanted to see their families' immediately after recovery from surgery. This suggests that operating room personnel need to look into this situation. They need to be responsible for keeping the patients' family members informed as they wait outside the operating room. They need to provide them with information periodically, so that the family members know the situation of surgery. They should call families to be with patients at the post-anesthesia care unit as soon as the patients are transferred to the unit.

2.3 In the postoperative phase, patients need information on 1) patients role information, and 2) situational or procedural information. Patient wanted information to perform their role in managing their wound and discharge information. This suggests that nurses need to teach patients how to recognize the signs of infection and stress this information during the preoperative and postoperative phases. Nurses also need to focus on discharge information. In recent times, patients are discharged earlier than in the past, and postoperative time is limited. Nurses need to provide discharge information and teaching skills preoperatively and reinforce these in the postoperative phase. This will help patients understand their role in taking care of their surgical wound, doing postoperative exercises, and performing postdischarge care.

3. These findings can be used to formulate a checklist for the assessment of patients' information needs. Nurses can use the information from the checklists for individual patients' preoperative teaching.

Nursing Education

These findings can be used to formulate a curricular guideline. Nursing students need to practice assessing patients' needs for information. Nursing educators need to ensure the guideline is used by their students during practicum sessions. With this guideline, they can conduct teaching sessions according to the patients' information needs in perioperative care.

Nursing Research

This study contributes to greater understanding of patients' information needs in perioperative care. However, due to limitations of the study, further research is recommended.

1. Further research should be conducted with a larger sample size to have more reliable information about patients' and nurses' perceptions of patients' information needs in perioperative care. Larger studies are needed across populations to examine the similarities and differences in patients' information needs in perioperative care.

2. Further research is needed to explore whether patients received the information from the nurses in the clinical setting. This is to ensure continuity and strengthen the research evidence to be used in the development of teaching guidelines in surgical care.

3. Further intervention research needs to be conducted to test the effectiveness of an information/education program constructed based on the findings of this study.