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Title:

Introduction to Nursing Theory

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Summary:

One of the most important required classes that you will take in nursing school is Introduction to Nursing Theory. Nursing Theory has a fairly broad definition, encompassing many different schools of thought on what nursing should be or how it should be practiced. The study of Nursing Theory includes learning about the numerous models of nursing that have been proposed, many of them in the last twenty years or so.

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Article Body:

One of the most important required classes that you will take in nursing school is Introduction to Nursing Theory. Nursing Theory has a fairly broad definition, encompassing many different schools of thought on what nursing should be or how it should be practiced. The study of Nursing Theory includes learning about the numerous models of nursing that have been proposed, many of them in the last twenty years or so. Understanding the various models of nursing can help nursing students formulate their own theories and develop their own models and beliefs about their profession.

An introduction course in Nursing Theory will expose you to the various models of nursing that have been proposed and followed in hospitals throughout the country, and provide a frame of reference for your own beliefs and methods of nursing. You will learn about the major nursing theorists of the 20th century and since, and how to formulate your own models of nursing in order to be a more effective caregiver and medical assistant.

<b>The Parts of a Nursing Model</b>

All nursing theories or models have several essential parts. In order to be considered a valid nursing theory, a model must include a method of assessment to determine a patient's individual needs, and a method of implementing and measuring appropriate patient care. Most nursing models can be used to produce a care plan that will document a patient's treatment by all the healthcare professionals and workers who come into contact with him or her. The care plan should be flexible, so that it can be changed and evaluated daily as the patient's needs and abilities change.

The care plans themselves will be shaped by the theories behind the nursing model. Care plans fall roughly into five categories: metatheories, grand theories, mid-range theories, min-theories and micro theories, in order from the range of factors considered.

<b>A Brief History of Nursing Theories</b>

Originally, the role of the nurse was to carry out the orders of a physician. Nursing theories that arose from this model of patient care were essentially biomedical and focused on treating diseases rather than patients. These theories allowed little variation in care based on a patient's individual needs and abilities. The biomedical theories of nursing assume that all patients with the same illness have the same problems and require the same care. These theories do not take into account differences in patient knowledge and abilities due to socioeconomic, psychological or cultural differences.

Social models of nursing, by contrast, consider the patient from varying degrees of holistic viewpoints. They take into account differences among patients due to culture, economic and social status and other factors. One of the first nursing theorists, though her work is only considered a body of �nursing theory" in retrospect, was Florence Nightingale, who published her thoughts on nursing during the Crimean War in, Notes on Nursing: What it Is and What it Is Not, in 1859.

Nightingale's beliefs about nursing have influenced the shape of the profession for well over 150 years. She was the first to view the nurse as more than a servant carrying out the orders of a physician, but rather as a caregiver in her own right, who could manipulate the environment and situation to influence the patient's well-being. Since then, there have been many models of nursing proposed and accepted by various communities and types of nursing. The most familiar names in nursing theory include Madeleine Leininger, who brought concerns of recognizing cultural needs into nursing care, and Hildegard Peplau, who introduced the idea of nursing roles and the nurse-client relationship as major influences in quality of nursing care.

<b>Using Nursing Theory in the Real World</b>

As a student nurse, you will be expected to learn about and be able to describe various bodies of work and knowledge about nursing and nursing theories. Some programs may require you to develop and articulate your own nursing theory to help you formulate nursing care and nursing plans, and differentiate yourself as a nursing professional. In the real world, however, you will often find that different fields of nursing subscribe to specific theories of nursing.

While there is a great deal of semantic debate about whether the abundance of "nursing theory" is beneficial to the profession or splits it needlessly, there is no doubt that the study of nursing theory can help you understand nursing as a profession from multiple viewpoints, and can afford you the capability to begin to formulate your own concept of what it means to be a nurse, and how your actions fit into a full plan to best care for your patients.