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Review article

Conception of the human-to-human relationship in nursing



Věra Stasková*, Valérie Tóthová

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Health and Social Studies, Department of Nursing and Midwifery, České Budějovice, Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

It is obvious from the analysis of these publications focused on nursing, that the definition of this term is based on a nurse–patient relationship by some authors. The aim of our survey is to elucidate the nurse–patient relationship based on the approach developed by Joyce E. Travelbee, who is an American psychiatric nurse, educator and writer. She introduced the concept of interpersonal relationships in the 1960s. We used textual analysis of documents to process data for this paper, during which there was a historical and analytical approach adopted. Only publications focused on concepts of one-to-one relations in the approach of Joyce E. Travelbee were subjects of the textual analysis. Globally, there is a relatively small number of studies dealing with this issue regarding the approach of Joyce E. Travelbee. On the basis of textual analysis, we concluded that Joyce E. Travelbee was successful in highlighting the importance of the mutual understanding in creating interpersonal relationships, communication skills of nurses, overcoming of nurse–patient stereotypes and the emphasis on meeting the needs of both patients and nurses.

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Introduction

Nursing as a discipline is a relatively young scientific concept. Historically, there has been a shift in the development and understanding of nursing in the second half of the 18th century due to wars, epidemics and the development of medicine, which caused an increased need for care and treatment of patients [1,2]. The concept of nursing was first

defined by Florence Nightingale in 1860, with which she managed to lay the foundation of nursing theory and practice [3,4]. Since then, the development of a new conception of nursing has helped many nursing theorists such as Clara Weeks-Shaw, Isabel Hampton Robb, Bertha Harmer, Lavinia Dock, Isabel Stewart and Hildegard E. Peplau. Nursing experienced a great development in the 1960s, when many other nursing theorists (e.g. Faye Abdallah, Virginia A. Henderson, Ida J. Orlando, Ernestine Wiedenbach, Myra E. Levine, et al.),

* Corresponding author at: University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Health and Social Studies, Department of Nursing and Midwifery, U Výstaviště 26, 370 05 České Budějovice, Czech Republic.

E-mail address: staskova@zsf.jcu.cz (V. Stasková).

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especially in the USA, sought to develop their views on nursing [4]. At this time, Joyce E. Travelbee (1926–1973), a New Orleans psychiatric nurse, educator, innovator and nursing theorist, contributed to the theme of interpersonal relationships and interventions in mental health nursing [5,6]. She defined nursing with the concept of human-to-human relationship, which was introduced in her first monograph *Interpersonal Aspects of Nursing* issued in 1966. The publication is addressed to nurses in order to highlight the importance of nursing and interpersonal relationships in the nursing practice. In it, she introduced not only the key concepts of nursing including definitions and interpretations of nursing, but also the nurse–patient relationship, which in the second edition of the book in 1971 she understood as a human-to-human relationship [7,8].

In this context, let us note that the nurse–patient relationship in the context of nursing was interpreted by the Florence Nightingale in the book *Notes on Nursing* published in 1860 [9]. Introducing the concept of the nurse–patient relationship can be observed by other nursing theorists (see e.g. Clara Weeks-Shaw, Virginia A. Henderson and Bertha Harmer, Hildegard E. Peplau, Ida J. Orlando, Virginia A. Henderson et al.) [10–14]. Due to the formation of the concepts above, the efforts of some nursing theorists have become an important stage in the development of nursing as a separate discipline [15].

One of the incentives for the creation of this paper have become the facts mentioned and the conviction that the issue of interpersonal relationships is still relevant today, both in private and professional life, as proved by some home publications (see e.g. Karel Nettle, Sylva Bártlová, Ivana Chloubová, Marie Trešlová, etc.) [16–18] and foreign outputs (see e.g. Marinner-Ann Tomey and Martha Raile Alligood, Afaf Ibrahim Meleis, Jeffrey S. Jones, Joyce J. Fitzpatrick, Vickie L. Rogers, et al.) [19–21] which dealt with interpersonal relationships especially in the context of helping by health care professionals. Another impetus for the issuing of this article was the fact that the concept of human-to-human relationship in the concept of Joyce E. Travelbee has not yet been translated into Czech language and designed so as to offer a deeper understanding of the context not only to the nursing public.

Our goal is to bring the concept of interpersonal relationships based on the work of Joyce E. Travelbee closer, with an effort to interpret it through written text both in her publications and supporting publications by foreign interpreters. For the purpose of this paper, the terms “nurse” and “patient” are marked like this, so they are understood as categories. The designation without quotation marks, i.e. nurse and patient, are understood as human beings.

Materials and methods

As a data processing method, a content analysis of the documents relating to the subject on the basis of key words was used: nursing, relationship, man, Joyce Travelbee. Through the resources of EBSCO, Library of Congress Online Catalog, Scopus, Web of Science, and free internet, the publications which dealt with the concept of the man-to-man relationship based on the concept of Joyce E. Travelbee were searched for. The literary research was conducted from July to September 2014. Only foreign publications were found.

Subsequently, abstracts of individual contributions were studied, in order to find those that are directly related to the topic. During the studies of individual abstracts, it was discovered that besides the English language, there are also works in Portuguese, Norwegian, Swedish, Spanish, Slovak, Danish and Japanese languages. It was mainly a research study published in professional journals and final university qualification works for which the interpersonal relationship of Joyce E. Travelbee became an inspiration. The works which were written in a language other than English were not subjected to textual analysis. Only the publications which were written in English and directly related to the topic were subjected to an analysis. Due to the fact that only monographs were analyzed, only those publications whose authors worked on primary sources of Joyce E. Travelbee, not secondary ones (meaning Joyce E. Travelbee), were used for the proper text analysis. Based on textual analysis of both Joyce E. Travelbee and various research studies and final university theses, including monographs (i.e., with the support of other artists), our effort was to bring the concept of the man-to-man relationship closer, not only to the professional nursing public.

Results

Assumptions of a man-to-man relationship

The goal of nursing is fulfilled through interpersonal relationships: caring of an individual (or a family) in order to prevent or handle the experience with an illness or suffering and help them (and their families) to find sense in these experiences [7,8]. To establish and create an interpersonal relationship, so that both the nurse and patient must treat each other as individual human beings rather than as a “nurse” and a “patient”, as the patient responds as an individual human being and not as an “ordinary patient” or even a “room number”. A nurse is also a special human being, not a personification of all nurses. The prerequisite of an interpersonal relationship is the fact that both the nurse and the patient need to see one another as unique human beings, therefore exceeding the classic “patient” and “nurse” stereotypes [8]. It means that the nurse and the patient are human beings, not role players, and in order to create an interpersonal relationship, it is necessary to overstate their roles and be first and foremost a person, not a category.

One of the other assumptions regarding creating an interpersonal relationship, is the interaction that occurs when the nurse communicates with the patient, gives them medication, performs nursing activities or assists in a doctor's surgery [8]. During the interaction between the nurse and the patient, both individuals influence each other and communicate both verbally or non-verbally [19]. Joyce E. Travelbee was convinced that the creation of an interpersonal relationship between a nurse and a patient helps the patient to actively participate in their care.

Although an interpersonal relationship is conceived as a mutual process, nurses are responsible for establishing and maintaining these interactions. A nurse consciously knows what she is doing, thinking, feeling and experiencing. A nurse performs nursing interventions in full consciousness, fully

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