



EDITORIAL ARTICLE

Emotional Intelligence on nursing as an anxiety management tool

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The role of emotions in the formation of nursing professionals has been scarcely studied. Nursing professionals are prone to stress in their work, with negative consequences for their health. Among the main causes of stress, is the contact with suffering and death, lack of preparedness to deal with the emotional needs of patients and their families, fatigue and night work.¹

Anxiety is one of the most common problems that health professionals have to deal with. Hospital is a stressful environment for its staff,² especially physicians and nurses. These stressors may have negative effects on their mental health and performance.³

Individuals who have direct contact with patients, extreme of hazardous responsibility, precision at the performance of duty, or shift work develop over a longer or shorter period of time the burnout syndrome.⁴ But the complications caused by this stress can be prevented by using emotional intelligence as an anxiety management tool.³

According to Daniel Goleman emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity of recognising our own feelings and those of others, of motivating ourselves and of managing emotions well within ourselves and in our relationships.⁵

Emotional intelligence plays a mediatory role between mental health and stress. Those with higher emotional intelligence have more ability to cope with the environmental conflicts than those without. Emotional awareness and its regulation can also lead to better stress management and performance of tasks. As nurses face numerous occupational stressors including shift work, high work load, frequent contacts with patients, suffering and death, they are more prone to develop conflicts that would ultimately result in jeopardizing interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence and mental health can help people solve their occupational problems^{6,7} and develop committed nurses. Emotional intelligence skills, particularly "self awareness," help nurses to get familiar with their emotions, behaviors, and reactions as self awareness is the process of understanding one's thoughts, conflicts, motivations.⁸

EI is shown for nurses as a protective factor against stress and a facilitative factor for their health.⁹ Higher EI is significantly related with lower stress and burnout.¹⁰

EI developmental interventions, is an idea which is discussed with great interest. Training programs which may improve EI in health care professionals should be introduced not only in working environment but also in nursing studies. Recognition and acceptance of emotions, dealing correctly with anxiety and most important emotional expression, should consist the core of these educational programs.

But it is quite unclear to what extent can EI be developed or taught.¹¹ There is evidence that teaching EI may increase feelings of control and competence.¹² By integrating emotional intelligence into the curriculum¹³ provides nurses with a greater opportunity to understand themselves, their colleagues and patients and the way in which they create healthy relationships with others.



There is a great need of developing educational strategies in order to enhance EI in health care environment.¹⁴

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