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# UNIT 6 ISSUES, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN PSYCHIATRIC NURSING

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## 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the issues and trends of psychiatric nursing;
- explain the challenges faced by a mental health psychiatric nurse;
- describe the role of a psychiatric nurse in a mental health team; and
- describe the various settings in which nurse can provide mental health services.

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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Mental health nursing has been one of the most challenging fields in nursing practice. The reason being the acute shortage of trained psychiatric nurses. The need for mental health nurses is increasing because of the changed life style of people, stress at school and work place. Competition in every sphere of life has led to an increase in consultation with the mental health team. In this unit you will study about the challenges in psychiatric nursing, issues and trends related to psychiatric nursing and the role of mental health nurses. It also includes the increased scope of a mental health psychiatric nurse.

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## 6.2 ISSUES AND TRENDS IN PSYCHIATRIC NURSING

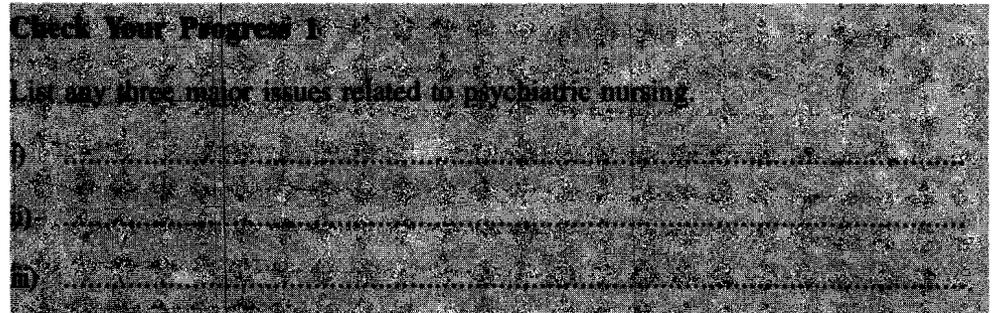
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Some of the issues related to psychiatric nursing are:

- Inadequate training of nurses to work in psychiatric settings
- Defining the role of a professional psychiatric nurse
- Maintenance of standards of psychiatric nursing while caring for patients in the **hospital** and **community**

- Provision of promotional avenues for the qualified and specialized psychiatric nursing specialists.
- Under utilization of the abilities of a qualified mental health psychiatric nurse specialist
- Issues related to psychiatric nursing are also emphasized in a document prepared by MOHFW (2004).
- Many psychiatric settings are almost entirely staffed with people having limited training performing tasks for which they are not adequately equipped
- There is a lack of clearly listed definitions of the roles of professional psychiatric nurses
- Due to the lack of qualified nurses a psychiatric nurse is more of coordinator than a therapist at present.
- There is a need for psychiatric nurses to be free from time consuming and emotionally exhausting work of a ward manager, and focus on their role as clinical nurses.
- Greater emphasis should be given to encourage a Master's Degree in Psychiatric Nursing, so that nurses become pioneers in teaching non-professionals and play active roles in specialized treatment modalities like behaviour therapy, family therapy and individual and group counseling.
- To offer DPN courses in more colleges so that trained psychiatric nurses will be available for psychiatric units in general and district hospitals
- Though in 1964-1965 the integration of psychiatric nursing was considered and the INC made it a prerequisite, most schools do not have properly trained teachers to teach this subject at present. They also do not have the facilities to send students for affiliated psychiatric nursing courses.
- To maintain the minimum standards of psychiatric nursing care in mental hospitals, priority needs to be given to increase psychiatric nursing manpower at the diploma, master's and doctorate levels.
- At present there are only 756 qualified diploma holders in Psychiatric Nursing, 172 Master's degree holders in Psychiatric Nursing and only six doctorates in Psychiatric Nursing in India. The figure is meager compared to the number of qualified psychiatrists in India (the above number is based on the information received from various institutions in India).
- The quality of mental health services delivered will ultimately depend on the persons equipped to deliver it. Psychiatric nurses are capable of playing vital roles in specialised areas like community mental health centers, family and marital counseling centers, child and adolescent centers, geriatric and school mental health programmes. Greater emphasis needs to be given in the appropriate use of their services. Many such highly qualified psychiatric nurses opt for foreign assignments because of problems in appropriate placement and disparities in pay scales as compared with other mental health professionals in India
- There is ample evidence of the vital role of psychiatric nursing both in the hospital and the community. There is crucial need to create proper jobs at par with other professionals, particularly in the community. High priority must be given to fill vacant positions in educational institutions. This will facilitate adequate manpower development in psychiatric nursing.

- Adequate promotion avenues in psychiatric settings for qualified **psychiatric** nurses should **be** created. As nurses do not have promotional avenues in psychiatric settings, they prefer to work in general healthcare delivery and even choose to work in foreign countries.
- The national mental health **programme** for India (1982) recommended the formation of a District Mental Health Team (DMHT) in order to decentralize mental healthcare at the district level, with two qualified psychiatric **nurses** and one psychiatrist.
- The role of the psychiatric nurse in the district mental health programme is to provide care to the in-patients. The care includes meeting their basic needs, conducting occupational therapy, recreational therapy and individual and group therapy, along with mental health education to families and the public in general.
- In **addition** to the above are the qualified non-professionals working at **taluk** and Primary Health Centres (**PHCs**). They should also supervise the task of multipurpose workers in mental health care delivery. They should assist psychiatrists in research activities and in monitoring mental health care at district and **PHC** levels. Their active participation in mental health education to the public will go long way in creating public awareness in the care of individuals with various **mental** disorders.



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## 6.3 CHALLENGES IN MENTAL HEALTH NURSING

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The issues discussed in this section **raise** many challenges for mental health psychiatric nurses. The most common challenge faced by them are:

1) **The Changing Trends in Practice: From Hospital to Community**

**Shorter** hospital stays have increased the need for community based support for people with both acute and long **term** illness. The acutely ill who are discharged to **the** community continue to need expert professional care and intensive care. These changes in the environment of health care practices have posed many challenges for nurses. Psychiatric nurses have to assume a leadership role and work closely in community to provide and improve access to mental health care services to the masses. Nursing training emphasis needs to **be** on preparation of nurses who have the orientation and have specialized training in providing community mental health care services, home care services and extended health care services.

2) **Need for Preparation of Nurses in Advanced Skills and Knowledge**

Many nurses find that the job qualifications for positions they have traditionally held now demand they acquire new skills and knowledge. The hospitals need to **be** staffed with trained psychiatric nursing personnel. Therefore, they must keep on updating their knowledge in the areas of

psychopharmacology, group interventions, evidence based therapies and disease management. There has to be training of nurses for M Sc. Nursing in psychiatric nursing. Every nurse working in the psychiatric ward should have a Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing or some sort of relevant training.

### 3) Technological Changes

Mental health nurses must master computer technology and refine their business and accounting **skills**. In this way, they can use new developments in their environment to deliver better patient care.

### 4) Need for Quality Patient Care and Consumer Empowerment

The current environment demands psychiatric mental health care which is high on quality and low on costs. Consumer empowerment has been an emerging movement over the past decade. This makes it essential for nurses to market their **skills** to ensure that they will be included among the mental health care providers of the future. There standards of practice in the field of psychiatric nursing need to be developed.

### 5) Skills Required for Working with Vulnerable/At Risk Groups

Mental health nurses need to continue their commitment to **working** with the underserved population, the elderly, children, adolescents and the seriously mentally ill, because they have much to offer with regard to the care and well being of these vulnerable groups. Whatever the environment; individuals, families and communities will continue to experience significant mental health problems. Thus, the need for psychiatric nurses to be competent professionals will also exist.

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## 6.4 MENTAL HEALTH TEAM

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Mental health team consists of Psychiatrist, Psychiatric Nurse, Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatric social worker, occupational therapist and recreational therapist. These persons work as members of mental health team for treating the mentally ill patients. Let us discuss the role of members of mental health team one by one.

### Psychiatric Nurse (Clinical Specialist)

She should have a Masters Degree in Psychiatric Nursing. She should be **skillful** in group, family and individual psychotherapy and should participate actively in hospital and community set up for promoting mental health and prevention of mental illness at the primary, secondary and tertiary level.

A registered Nurse in a psychiatric unit or hospital goes through a General Nursing and Midwifery programme or B Sc. Nursing or Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing (10 months course). She develops **skills** in caring for mental patients under the supervision of clinical psychiatric nurse specialist.

### Psychiatrist

A doctor with post-graduation in psychiatry should have at least two to three years of residency training.

### Clinical Psychologist

Clinical Psychologist must have a doctorate degree in clinical psychology and should be registered with the clinical psychologists association.

### **Psychiatric Social Workers**

Helshe is post-graduate in psychiatric social work and it responsible for assessing the support system of individual family and community.

### **Occupational Therapist**

Occupational therapist (OT) has specilised training. If occupational therapy is well planned, it not only helps in treatment and early recovery of the patient but also helps in rehabilitation of the patients.

### **Re-creational Therapist**

Recreational therapist plans activities for mentally ill patient to improve their socialization skills.

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## **6.5 SCOPE OF MENTAL HEALTH PSYCHIATRIC NURSE**

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- From the description of the issues, trends and challenges faced by psychiatric nurses and the role of the nurse in the psychiatric health team, it is evident that the scope of work of mental health psychiatric nurses is wide.
- S/he can work in any psychiatric setting i.e. OPD, wards, therapy room, day hospital, family care units, child guidance clinic, half way homes, rehabilitation centers.
- Mental health psychiatric nurses can also provide her/his special knowledge and skills in general hospitals. Generally, patients and relatives are under stress and severe anxiety due to health problems. S/he can provide the specilised services in OPD, causality and emergency ward, maternity ward, pre-post surgery units, medical ward. Peadiatric ward, rehabilitation units, or any other long-term illnesses like analogy ward, orthopedic ward etc.
- S/he can also work in the national health programmes, social welfare agencies, drug addiction and alcohol deaddiction units, crisis intervention units.
- Mental health nurses can provide consultation to nurses of other wards/ specilization whenever required
- Participate in **continuing** education programme and in service education of GNM, ANM and other categories of health professionals

### **Check Your Progress 2**

List the challenges in mental health nursing.

- i) .....
- ii) .....
- iii) .....
- iv) .....
- v) .....
- vi) .....

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## 6.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you have learnt about the issues and trends related to mental health and psychiatric nursing. You have also read about the various challenges that a nurse faces because of the changing trends. The knowledge and skills which you acquire from this unit will enable you to work in various settings as a team or independently.

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## 6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Adequate preparation of nurses to work in psychiatric settings
- ii) Defining the role of a professional psychiatric nurse
- iii) Maintenance of standards of psychiatric nursing while caring for patients in the hospital and community
- iv) Provision of promotional avenues for the qualified and specialized psychiatric nursing specialist

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) The changing trends in practice
- ii) Need for preparation of nurses in advanced skills and knowledge
- iii) Technological changes
- iv) Need for quality patient care and consumer empowerment
- v) Skills required for working with vulnerable/at risk groups
- vi) Political empowerment of nurses

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## 6.8 FURTHER READINGS

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- Agarwal *et al* (2004), *Mental Health An Indian Perspective, 1946-2003*, Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi.
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- Stuart, Gail W. and Laraia, Michele T. (2005), *Principles and Practice of Psychiatric Nursing*, 8th edition, Missouri: Mosby.
- Varcadis, Elizabeth (1998), *Foundations of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing*, 3rd edition, Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company.