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The role of nurses in traditional–modern medicine conflict

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Abstract

In almost all societies around the world, traditional medicine applications are being resorted to for diagnosis and treatment of various diseases. As modern medical methods encounter difficulty in reaching the public and being expensive, traditional medicine methods are preferred to modern medical methods and can be used more frequently in rural areas. Traditional methods can also be used for a variety of reasons although its scientific validity is discussed. There is a constant conflict between modern medicine and traditional medicine and they often coexist in spite of the fact that modern medicine usually does not approve traditional medicine. The nurse enhances the quality of care by taking into account the cultural characteristics of the individual and broadens the perspective of the nursing. It is the right approach for nurses to avoid conflict with the individual they care for in cultural practices, act together and guide them to develop a healthier lifestyle.

Keywords: Traditional medicine, modern medicine, nurse.

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1. Introduction

It is seen in today's world there is a rapid growth in science and technology, treatment of many diseases is a possibility, diseases that used to cause terrible damages in the past are no longer a threat, the number of people benefitting from healthcare services is gradually increasing, the quality of services and the level of satisfaction are increasing. However, despite the growing technology, increasing scientific data and easier availability of healthcare services to the general public, it is seen that people still choose methods that they have seen from their elders to treat certain diseases (Kose, 2002). Almost every nation in the world applies traditional medicine to diagnose and cure different diseases (Acar, 2016). Even though the success of modern science has shown has provided it with a steady dominance; it is the interfering structure against the body, it abandoning its anthropocentric being, it treats the body as a machine, the side effects of pharmaceutical products and failures in treatments of certain diseases have caused a lack of confidence in modern science among people (Aytac & KurtDas, 2014; Ersin & Aksoy, 2004). Due to the difficulty in accessing modern scientific methods, the use of traditional medicine methods is more commonly seen in rural areas. Another reason why the traditional methods are popular among people is the higher costs of modern methods (Dorai, 2012). As a result of these reasons, despite the lack of scientific validation, the use of cheap and more accessible traditional methods can be witnessed (Durmus, Carli, Karapinar & Keskin, 2014).

In addition, the will to live longer and healthier, to decrease the side effects of pharmaceutical products, strengthening the immune system, eliminating the feeling of hopelessness, strengthening healthy behaviours, to avoid stress and loss of control are several other reasons why traditional methods are used (Anderson, Scrimshaw, Fullilove, Fielding & Normand, 2003). Whatever the reason for the use, the most worrisome situations for people using these methods include possible lateness to diagnose their disease and to receive medical care, interference by incompetent people or possibly facing harm as a result of the side effects of their preferred method (Oral, Ozturk, Balci & Sevinc, 2016). Unfortunately, traditional methods might have negative effects and these effects could have life-threatening effects (Golbasi & Egri, 2010).

2. Nurse's role in traditional—modern medicine conflict

Despite the advancing technology, ever-growing scientific data and easier availability of healthcare services in today's world, the general public still seems to prefer using treatment methods they have seen their elders use. Another aspect of these treatment methods is, just as it was in past, that they have continued to last because of their combinations with old or new belief systems.

Culture is described as values, beliefs, manners and behaviours, customs that are learned, shared and passed from one generation to another by a group of people (Egri & Konak, 2011). The beliefs and practices of people regarding healthcare are a part of the culture of the society they are living in. In order to provide a better healthcare service, it is vital to understand how the population that will receive the said treatment interprets and reacts to the concepts of disease and health. Culture affects a person's life in many ways, including but not limited to how their personality is shaped, parent reactions, the way a kid is raised and what type of tone is used. Culture is also influential in the ways of how a person talks, which language they speak, how they dress, what they believe in, how they will treat their patients, what to do with the dead and how they will be nourished (Tortumluoglu, Okanli & Ozer, 2004).

Also, defined as the way of life in a society, a culture deeply affects people's perception of health. Just as socio-cultural diseases, organic disorders too are influenced by factors that are rooted in culture (Bolsoy & Sevil, 2006). Our cultural background plays an important role in shaping our beliefs about health, our values and our behaviours regarding health (Clark, 2003).

While known internationally as it is, 'folk medicine' is used in the same meaning as 'traditional medicine' in Turkish literature. While folk medicine can be described as beliefs, manners and behaviours about disease and health concepts, it is referred to as 'home medicine' by certain

anthropologists due to it being seen as a medical practice related to societies' belief, custom and value systems (Turkdogan, 1991).

Traditional medicine differs from modern medicine and as part of the culture, it exists among people (Ersin & Aksoy, 2004). Even though modern medicine does not approve traditional medicine they typically coexist. Above everything, there is common ground between modern medicine and traditional medicine in every level of a society and medical subsystems belonging to these usually exist together (Aytac & KurtDas, 2014). Healthcare services that will be provided should be planned, applied and evaluated in accordance with these realities.

Before delivering healthcare services to a society, it is necessary; to get to know that particular society better, to find out their needs and expectations in the health department and to understand the reasons of their reactions to provided services. This becomes possible by getting familiar with the socio-cultural structure of the society that will receive these services. If the nurse does not have enough information about the group she is delivering services to, she could fail to satisfy their needs and their interaction with the individual could be affected negatively (Pinikahana, Manias & Happnell, 2003). Taking the cultural characteristics into consideration while providing care to individuals increases the quality of the services and broadens the point of view of being a nurse. In cultural practices that are hazardous to a person's health, the nurses should avoid being in conflict with the person they are caring for and act with them to guide them to form a healthier lifestyle (Bekar, 2001). The nurses could play an active role in protecting the cultural characteristics and traditions by knowing the traditional beliefs and practices that are used by societies, exposing and trying to abolish the hazardous ones, and by protecting the ones that are harmless to continue (Bilgen Sivri & Karatas, 2015).

3. Conclusion

Healthcare services cannot be thought of as separable from the culture they are providing care and services to. Ignoring the cultural characteristics of individuals and the traditional methods they use while unconditionally encouraging the use of modern medicine will lead to inadequate services, decrease in effectiveness of the services provided and being not adopted by the society. As nurses what we must do is to provide services by taking their cultural characteristics into account and shape our education and consultancy services according to society's characteristics. In practices that are hazardous to a person's health, they should avoid being in conflict with the person they are giving services to and act with them to guide them to form a healthier lifestyle. These require nurses to be sensitive towards cultural characteristics, to know the society they are giving services to, and be efficient and equipped enough to provide services and education in accordance with society's characteristics.

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