

## The importance of holistic nursing care

Silvana Gripshi

*Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences, University of Medicine Tirana-Albania*

### Abstract

Nowadays, health care requires a radically different type of nurse who understands an integral and holistic perspective, relationship-centered care, behavioral change strategies, health promotion, health maintenance, and disease prevention. Holistic nursing is the most complete way to conceptualize and practice professional nursing that has healing the whole person as its goal, taking into account the connection between mind, body, emotion, spirit, social, cultural, environment and past relationships in order to restore the patient to a whole. The purpose of this literature review is to describe the characteristics of holistic care and its importance in practice. The most significant studies and theoretical foundations regarding holistic care from nursing databases were identified. Emphasis was placed on the characteristics and effects of holistic nursing care.

From the reviewed studies it was found that holistic nursing describes "whole person care" often acknowledging body-mind-spirit, and now it is defined as disciplinary practice specialty.

By undertaking a conceptual analysis of holistic care, its meaning can be clarified which will encourage nurses to improve the quality of their caring including it in practice, and nursing educators to include it in nursing syllabi. Holistic healthcare offers great promise as an approach to health and wellness for people. Studies have shown that Millennials prefer a more holistic and preventive approach to medicine, so it's not only the future of nursing that's taking a holistic approach, but the future of healthcare in general.

**Keywords:** holistic care, nursing, holism.

### Introduction

Presently, there are two major challenges that are emerging in nursing. The first is to integrate the concepts of technology, mind, and spirit into nursing practice; the second is to create and integrate models for health care that guide the healing of self and others. Holistic nursing is the most complete way to conceptualize and practice professional nursing.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of caring for the entire person, not just their physical body, is one that dates back to Florence Nightingale. Florence Nightingale's devotion was to care for those who could not care for themselves. She encouraged holistic care by recognizing the importance of environment touch, light, scents, music and silent reflection in therapy process (Erickson, 2007).<sup>8</sup>

Holistic Nursing is defined as "all nursing practice that has healing the whole person as its goal" (American Holistic Nurses' Association, 1998) and Florence Nightingale, is considered to be the founder of Holistic Nursing, who taught nurses to focus on the principles of holism: unity, wellness and the interrelationship of human beings and their environment.<sup>2</sup>

Holistic nursing is the concept of caring of a person as a whole and emphasizes on the nurses to take into account the connection between mind, body, emotion, spirit, social, cultural, environment and past relationships in order to restore the patient to a whole.<sup>3</sup>

In 1970, most nurse student and researcher sees nursing as being concerned with the whole person. The American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA) was established in 1980 to represent holistic nurses, also to encourage in educating of nurses, researcher in practicing holistic nursing and the American Holistic Nurses Certification Corporation (AHNCC) was also established in 1997 to recognize holistic nurses.

AHNCC work hand in hand with AHNA to develop further holistic nursing and also to provide educational opportunities in holistic nursing field. The American Nurses Association (ANA) first recognized holistic nursing in 2006, as a special area of nursing practice which gave nurses practicing holistic nursing a base for practicing and also an obvious difference between holistic nurses and ordinary nurses in healthcare professions.<sup>3,7</sup>

The purpose of this literature review is to describe the characteristics of holistic care and its importance in practice. The most significant studies and theoretical foundations regarding holistic care from nursing databases were identified. Emphasis was placed on the characteristics and effects of holistic nursing care.

### **Holistic Nursing Care**

Holistic care is derived from the philosophies of humanism and holistic and it emphasize that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts such as person's mind and spirit affect.<sup>10,16</sup> Holistic care was described as behavior that recognizes a person as a whole and acknowledges the interdependence among their biological, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects.<sup>13</sup> In this holistic model, all disease has a psychosomatic component, and biologic, psychological, social, and spiritual factors always contribute to a patient's symptoms, disease, or illness.<sup>5</sup> The spiritual dimension in the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model incorporates spirituality in a broad context: values, meaning, and purpose in life. It reflects the human traits of caring, love, honesty, wisdom and imagination. The concept of spirit implies a quality of transcendence, a guiding force, or something outside the self and beyond the individual nurse or client. The human spirit can make the difference between life and death, as well as wellness and illness.<sup>7</sup> As shown in figure (Pier Luigi Masini 2016)<sup>12</sup>, each component of the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model is interdependent and interrelated. It is necessary to address all these components to achieve optimal therapeutic results.

Holistic care includes a wide range of approaches, including: Drugs, surgery, education, communication, self-care, and complementary treatment. Restoring power and responsibility to patients and encouraging them to exercise self-care is another aspect of holistic care which leads to therapeutic consultation, hope, dignity, self-esteem, self-sufficiency, self-regulation, personal growth, vigor, and vitality.<sup>17</sup> The Holistic Nurses Association confirms that in holistic nursing, health is believed to originate in a balance among a person's physical, spiritual, psychological, and



to differentiate and understand healing and curing. Curing focuses on manly eradicating what is causing the illness this includes the use of medicine in order to find a physical cure to a disease. Healing which is mainly the concept of holistic nursing focuses on finding balance in the body, mind, and spirit in a human being. The best outcome for a patient is when the two healing and curing are combined (Dossey, 2005).<sup>7</sup>

Nurses incorporate many kinds of approaches such as medication, communication, education, and self-help. The alternative or complementary therapies used may include: acupuncture, aromatherapy, art therapy, hydrotherapy, music therapy, nutritional supplements, therapeutic touch.<sup>2</sup>

### **Standards of Holistic Nursing**

The current Standards of Holistic Nursing are based on five Core Values of practice:<sup>15</sup>

- 1) Holistic Philosophy and Education;
- 2) Holistic Ethics, Theories, and Research;
- 3) Holistic Nurse Self-Care;
- 4) Holistic Communication, Therapeutic Environment and Cultural Competence;
- 5) Holistic Caring Process.

These core values represent the essence of holistic nursing and are each necessary for holistic practice.

Core value 1, *Philosophy and Education*, emphasizes that holistic nursing is based on a philosophical framework embracing holism and a commitment to education, reflection, and knowledge.

Core value 2, *Holistic Ethics, Nursing Theory and Research*, emphasizes that professional nursing is grounded in theory, informed by research and bound by ethical principles to guide practice that is competent, thoughtful, and principled.

Core value 3, *Holistic Nurse Self-care*, is based on the belief that nurses must engage in self-care to promote health and personal awareness so that the nurse may serve others as an instrument of healing.

Core value 4, *Holistic Communication, Therapeutic Environment and Cultural Competence*, emphasizes the requirement for nurses to engage with clients to promote mutually-determined goals for health and healing. Lastly,

Core Value 5, the *Holistic Caring Process*, emphasizes an evolution of the nursing process to embrace assessment and therapeutic care addressing client patterns, problems, and needs in an atmosphere of caring (Frisch, Dossey, Guzzetta, & Quinn, 2000).

### **Discusions and conclusions**

Nurses can not only use holistic nursing care to enrich patients 'lives, but to enrich their lives as well. Nursing is a difficult profession physically, mentally, emotionally and sometimes exhausting. One way to enhance these experiences and provide better overall patient care is through holistic nursing care. The key is not necessarily

how much time you spent interacting with a patient, but how you used the time you had with them. Nurses should always try to take advantage of the short time they have with each patient. Nurses should promote the psychological and emotional well-being of patients in order to facilitate physical healing. When this is done, the relationship with the patient changes and grows into something more positive than before leading to better patient outcomes and can increase happiness and purpose in working as a nurse.<sup>15</sup>

A 2017 study from Sweden found that patients of APRNs who provided holistic care were satisfied with the quality and accessibility. Similar results were shown in a 2020 study of patients with permanent colostomies in Hong Kong. Those who received holistic care intervention reported better outcomes than patients who received routine care.<sup>6</sup>

Others studies also show that Millennials prefer a more holistic and preventive approach to medicine, so it's not only the future of nursing that's taking a holistic approach, but the future of healthcare in general.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, to develop holistic care it is necessary to attach more importance to motivational factors, compatibility between nurses' personalities and their profession, improvement of nurses' communicative skills, promoting religiousness, and encouragement of commitment in practicing nurses as well and nurse educators to include holistic care in nursing syllabi which offer great promise as an approach to health and wellness for people.

## References

- American Holistic Nurses' Association, AHNA Standards of Holistic Nursing Practice (Flagstaff, AZ: AHNA, 2003)
- American Holistic Nurses' Association, AHNA (2015). What is Holistic Nursing?. [Online] Available at: <http://www.ahna.org/About-Us/What-is-Holistic-Nursing> [Accessed 20 Aug. 2015].
- American Nurse ANA (2013) <https://www.myamericannurse.com/holistic-nursing-focusing-on-the-whole-person/>
- Carson Newman University, (2021). 21 Nursing Trends we expected to see in 2021 <https://onlinenursing.cn.edu/news/nursing-trends>
- Dossey, B, American Holistic Nurses' Association Core Curriculum for Holistic Nursing (Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers, 1997).
- Dossey, B. (2000). Introduction. In N. Frisch, B. Dossey, C. Guzzetta, & J. Quinn, (2000). AHNA Standards of Holistic Nursing Practice: Guidelines for caring and healing. (pp. xv - xxiii). Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.
- Dossey BM, Keegan L, eds. Holistic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice. 4th ed. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett; 2005:29-74.
- Erickson HL (2007). Philosophy and theory of holism. *Nursing Clinics of North America*; 42:139-63.
- Global Health, 2020 <https://globalhealtheducation.com/article/future-nursing>
- Keegan L. Holistic nursing. An approach to patient and self-care. *AORN J*. 1987;46:499-506. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Mariano, C. (2007). Holistic Nursing as a Specialty: Holistic Nursing—Scope and Standards of Practice. *Nursing Clinics of North America*, 42(2), pp.165-188.

- Masini. L.P. 2016 L'approcciobiopsicosociale in medicina <http://www.pierluigimasini.it/2016/02/01/lapproccio-biopsicosociale-in-medicina/>
- Morgan S, Yoder LH. A concept analysis of person-centered care. *J Holist Nurs.* 2012;30:6–15. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Patterson EF. The philosophy and physics of holistic health care: Spiritual healing as a workable interpretation. *J Adv Nurs.* 1998;27:287–93. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Practical Nursing (2021) The Importance of Holistic Nursing Care: How to Completely Care for your Patients <https://www.practicalnursing.org/importance-holistic-nursing-care-how-completely-care-patients>
- Tjale AA, Bruce J. A concept analysis of holistic nursing care in pediatric nursing. *Curators.* 2007; 30: 45–52. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Thompson EA, Quinn T, Paterson C, Cooke H, McQuigan D, Butters G. Outcome measures for holistic, complex interventions within the palliative care setting. *Complement TherClinPract.* 2008;14:25–32. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]