



The concept of nursing and compassion during COVID-19

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Abstract

This article was designed to draw attention to the importance of the compassionate approach in the recovery of individuals during the pandemic, and the development of compassionate behavior. It contributes to the learning of the positive and negative behaviors of the members of the profession and the candidates in their approach to sick individuals. The uncertainty, isolation and loneliness experienced by infected individuals during the COVID-19 highlighted the sense of compassion and compassionate approach. With compassionate approach and supporting the process with evidence, nurses will reveal the impact on patient care and contribution to professional practice.

Keywords: Pandemic, COVID-19, compassion, nursing

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Introduction

The COVID-19, which has impacted the whole world, is a disease that affects the respiratory system and many other systems and can be fatal. As the severity of the disease increases in infected individuals, the symptoms become more serious, and severe shortness of breath and hypoxia are often observed with many symptoms [1,2]. The presence of symptoms in infected individuals, the daily media coverage of the process and course of the pandemic with up-to-date data, and the deaths that were witnessed have been increasing the concerns and anxiety. The process of the pandemic is an important problem for the infected individuals, their families and healthcare professionals. In these periods of strict isolation, infected individuals need healthcare professionals who understand them psychosocially and attention where compassionate behavior is prominent [3,4]. The concept of compassion, the essence and fundamental value of nursing, and compassionate behaviors are becoming more important with the nursing profession during the COVID-19 pandemic [5,6].

The concept of compassion

A sense of compassion is an innate human emotion. Compassion is defined as the transition from an approach that is centered on self-love and respect to a conception that distributes respect and love to the whole being and appreciates this [7]. The concept of compassion is intertwined with the concepts of empathy, sympathy, altruism [8], pity, kindness and goodness, and are used interchangeably or with close meanings. The concept of compassion is stated to include all of these concepts used and is an emotion above all these concepts [9].

Compassion, according to The Turkish Language Association, is defined as "sadness and pity due to the bad situation faced by one person or another being" [10]. Another definition of compassion is "a feeling of deep sympathy and sadness for someone who has experienced pain or a misfortune, along with a desire to remove the suffering and its causes" [11]. In the Encyclopedia of Islam, it is used as a verb in the sense of "to show pity, to show kindness", and as a noun in the sense of "feeling of pity, kindness and grace which is done with this feeling" [12].

The German Philosopher Schopenhauer defined the concept of compassion as one of the three fundamental forces that exist in human beings. According to Schopenhauer, these fundamental forces are egoism, malice and compassion. Compassion is emphasized to

be the feeling at the root of human love which allows people to treat well without benefit and prevents injustice [13]. The concept of compassion has taken its place in psychology as a subject of late since it has been considered within or with close meanings of the concepts of self-renunciation/selflessness, intimacy and prosocial behavior (positive social behavior) and difficult to measure [14].

A sense of compassion is very important for sick individuals. The reason for this is, besides the technical care of the patients, they express that they need more compassionate attitudes and behaviors from the individuals who provide the service and care to them [15]. The concept of compassion is an important core value of the nursing profession, both because it has a significant impact on the quality of care and it is an indispensable element of patient-centered care [9].

Nursing and compassion

Nursing is the profession spending the longest time with patients whose health deteriorates and needs help, and witnesses the most vulnerable and special processes of patients. In these periods, nurses form the basis of nursing care with a humane approach and compassionate behavior [16]. Positive effects of showing interest in reducing the stress levels of individuals in nursing care, and communicating well emotionally and psychologically on clinical outcomes have been supported by the literature [8]. In the research conducted by The Royal College psychiatrists on the innate sense of compassion and compassionate approach in humans, the observation of compassionate behavior in terms of nurses and health workers is based on the following items. The characteristics of the nurse, which includes the innate sense of compassion in humans, were listed as three items by The Royal College psychiatrists;

1) Characteristics that must be possessed in terms of awareness:

- Awareness about the patient and his / her history, noticing the problems of the patients, listening carefully, taking the needs of the patients into account
- Awareness of emotions that will affect the compassionate approach of the nurse (for example busyness, anger, pressure to complete tasks, limited time).

2) Characteristics that must be possessed in terms of emotional response:

- A sense of warmth, affection, attachment

- Openness to being affected by the situation in the patient's mind: Being able to empathize with the patient as a separate individual
- Being able to overcome difficulty instead of avoiding or ignoring it,
- Not to judge, not to use accusatory terms, not to see the patient at the bottom hierarchically, to consider people as individuals, not as objects or part of their duties

3) Features that must be possessed in terms of responding to the needs of others:

- Being respectful and open to cooperation, communicating concerns accurately
- Being able to use a language reflecting a compassionate attitude (for example: not to manipulate patients by using their position, to administer the treatment after explaining it to the patients)
- Trying to alleviate the suffering of individuals in a sincere, polite and generous way.
- The nurse should balance organizational and occupational requirements with individual needs. The nurse should be in every detail of the patient's health care in effective treatment [7,17].

Being able to recognize the difficult situations that individuals are in, listening, smiling, tapping, answering the questions of individuals, performing painful procedures gently, having awareness of situations that cause stress are actions that include a sense of compassion and increase the quality of care [18]. In a study, the role of courtesy and kindness in care in oncology patients was investigated [19]. Five roles of kindness have been identified in individuals, deep listening, empathy, generous behavior, timely care, and support of family members. These behaviors have been concluded to be more important than questioning the treatment process. The positive effects of compassionate behaviors on recovery are supported by the studies in the literature. This once again reveals the importance of nursing and compassion in the COVID-19 process [19-21].

Nursing and compassion during COVID-19 pandemic

In the COVID-19 pandemic, when infected individuals need to be admitted to receive health care, their treatment and follow-ups are performed in their rooms alone without any family members accompanying them. Visit restrictions during the pandemic,

limitations on the communication of patients with their family members, and the uncertainty caused by the disease increase the stress levels in the process of coping with the disease. In this period, it is stated that if the isolation, uncertainty, fear and anxiety of individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 are not identified and managed correctly, the process may be physiologically and psychologically destructive [22]. The compassionate approach shown during the pandemic has been expressed as the key to meeting the needs of patients [23].

Nurses once again demonstrate the importance of compassionate behavior in the nursing profession by providing psychosocial support as well as medical treatment to sick individuals during the pandemic they perform with dedication [22]. In the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, they displayed the artistic dimension of the profession by giving the necessary attention and support not only to the patients also to their families and relatives. The family members couldn't hold their hands or hug them while their relatives were passing away. In this period, the compassionate approach of nurses has been the solution that will help patients both recover and not feel lonely with the bond established between them [24].

In a qualitative study conducted with a group of nurses providing care for COVID-19 patients, it is stated that humanistic care based on mutual understanding between nurse and patient is stated to be necessary [25]. It has been mentioned that it is necessary for healthcare professionals to have effective empathy and compassion to provide these patients with the most appropriate care. Nurses have stated that compassionate care would increase the spiritual vitality of the patient, and considering the importance of the issue, it should be addressed in family-centered care as well as physical care to ensure holistic care for these patients. Nurses have stated that a compassionate approach can help COVID-19 patients to get on with their lives [22,25].

In a study conducted during the pandemic, positive emotions in patients have been shown to be revealed with the approach of nurses with empathy, compassion and altruistic feelings towards patients [26]. There are health professionals who stated experiencing a high level of compassion satisfaction in this period. The basis of compassion satisfaction has been stated to be an empathetic, selfless, voluntary, benevolent relationship with individuals and their families and kind behaviors showing that they understand them

[6]. Nurses can bring out positive emotions in patients with a compassionate approach and provide effective nursing care by experiencing compassion satisfaction [27]. Compassion satisfaction is also necessary and important in the quality of patient care [21].

Conclusion

Staying in isolation which the COVID-19 patients needed to cope with the disease during the pandemic, staying away from family members and the uncertainty created by the pandemic is known to adversely affect the psychological and physical health of the individuals. As can be seen from studies conducted on patients, the compassionate approach and behavior of nurses facilitates the treatment process of individuals and positively affects their physical and psychological health. With the COVID-19 outbreak, the importance of compassion and compassionate behavior and its place in inpatient care has once again been revealed. Nurses involved in the management of the pandemic can be given the opportunity to share their experiences in the in-service training of health institutions and the content of the course in schools. This can support the development of the nursing profession by contributing to the development of a sense of compassion. In this way, it contributes to the learning of the positive and negative behaviors of the members of the profession and the candidates in their approach to sick individuals.

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Conflict of interest

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