A Concept Analysis of Nurses` Clinical Decision Making

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Abstract: Clinical decision making is a fundamental aspect of nurses` clinical practice and has a direct impact on the health and well-being of each patient. It is a process that nurses undertake on a daily basis when making judgments about the care they provide to patient. **Purpose:** The present study aimed at clarifying and defining the concept of clinical decision making, its attributes, antecedents, and implication in the nursing practice. **Method:** In this study, the steps of concept analysis were as follows: Select a concept, determine its aim, various definitions, determine the concept attributes and identify the antecedents and implications. **Data Collection:** For purposes of this concept analysis, PubMed, Google search engines, Ovid, CINAL and ProQuest, were scanned and searched using the keywords. **Conclusion:** A nurse's clinical decision making is the nurse's intuitive ability to facilitate a healthy life for the patient, and it is to actively break through the crisis situation that appears to the patient and make a desirable choice for a challenging alternative. In addition, the nurse professionally assesses and solves problems for the safety of the patient. **Recommendations:** Encourage periodic staff meeting between nurses and their supervisors to allow them express their feelings, seeking opinions, exchange their experiences during different situations and getting feedback and support. Hospitals need to represent nurses in hospital committees, sharing and participating in decision making about patients` problems and hospital policies. Nursing administrators and leaders should devise a program for staff nurses about decision making skills.

Keywords: Clinical decision making, concept analysis, nurses.

Introduction

The focus on quality and safety, the complexity of the patients presenting to the health care system, the growing body of knowledge and advances in technology challenge nurses to have the ability to make effective clinical decisions. The ability to make right and effective decisions that are rational, informed, logic and collaborative can greatly reduce costs while building a strong organizational focus and support the success of health care organization in meeting clients expectations (Covaleski, 2021).

Continuous improvement and innovation in nursing practice is a permanent challenge for every health care organization. The ability to make sound and effective clinical decisions requires nurses to be able to gather information, identify problems, generate alternatives, design and implement innovations that will help their` units meet expected patient care outcomes while increasing efficiency and decreasing costs (Alnutaifi, 2021, Abu-Arra et al., 2023).

Clinical decision-making nurtures professional nursing knowledge for maintaining the life and promoting the health of a patient. Above all, it is essential to solve the priority nursing problem of the patient based on clinical experience. The nurse can recognize the patient's priority health problem based on the patient's information and can predict the uncertain disease situation of the patient through clinical decision making. Therefore, in the clinical practice field, it is necessary for nurses to collect various information needed for the nursing of patients, and to make clinical decisions with rational and critical reasoning (Oh, Gu and Sok, 2022).

For nurses, clinical decision-making entails increasing their cognitive abilities and intuition, which will allow them to directly and indirectly identify the problems affecting their patients and select appropriate nursing alternatives for them. Thus, clinical decision making is a key competency required in the field of clinical practice. In addition, it allows the provision of high-quality nursing by consolidating the nursing practices and enabling important judgments to be made in the uncertain disease situation of a patient, thereby contributing to the patient's comfort (Ladin et al, 2023).

Purpose of study

The present study aimed at clarifying and defining the concept of clinical decision making, its attributes, antecedents, and consequences in the nursing.

Method

The aim of concept analysis is to examine the basic elements of a concept. The process allows researchers to distinguish between similarities and differences between concepts. The concept analysis method helps to clarify concepts, its strengths, and limitations used in nursing practice that have a broad scope (Walker & Avant, 2011). In this study, the steps of concept analysis were as follows: Select a concept, determine the aims of the analysis, identify various definitions of the concept, determine the concept attributes and identify the antecedents and consequences (Table 1).

Table (1): Adaptation of Walker and Avant (2011) steps of concept analysis

Steps of concept analysis	Description
Select a concept	Concept selection for analysis
Determine the aims or purposes of analysis	Focus on the purpose and intention of performing the CA
Identify all uses of the concept you can discover	Identify as many uses of the concept as you can find.
Determine the defining attributes	Establish the cluster of attributes most frequently associated with the concept
Identify antecedents and consequences	Antecedents are '...events or incidents that must occur or be in place prior to the occurrence of the concept. Consequences are '...events or incidents that occur as a result of occurrence of the concept'.
Define empirical referents	Classes or categories of actual phenomena that by their existence or presence demonstrate the occurrence of the concept.

Data Collection

For purposes of this concept analysis, PubMed, Google search engines, Ovid, ProQuest, and CINAHL were scanned. These databases were searched for the keywords "clinical decision making", "nursing" and "concept analysis". All studies between the years 2011 and 2020 were reviewed. Inclusion criteria were: Studies that contained the word "clinical decision making" in their title were selected; studies conducted by investigating the concept of clinical decision making with its correlations with general characteristics and various variables; studies were written in English, and described or studied clinical decision making in nursing in any setting and articles published in academic journals after being peer-reviewed.

Definitions and uses of the concept

Clinical decision making is the process of choosing a particular action that deals with a problem or opportunity from several alternatives to achieve organizational or managerial goals. Clinical decision making is a fact of life for nurses who make many decisions on daily basis. It is taken as primary function of nurses and key component in the role of nurse. Clinical decision making process is a continuous and basic component of any health care organization (Chang, Kao & Hwang, 2020).

Clinical decision making is the process of making choices by identifying the problem, gathering information and assessing alternatives resolutions. So, when nurses make decision they are choosing the alternatives that they perceive to be correct and using preexisting knowledge and new information. Clinical decision making is a process by which nurses make decisions about patient care and treatment. The concept of clinical decision is always vital to nursing practice because it`s impact on patient

outcomes (Teece, Baker & Smith, 2022).

Defining Characteristics/ Essential Attributes

Determining the defining cluster of attributes most frequently associated with the concept is a crucial aspect of the analysis (Walker & Avant, 2011). These help to differentiate the concept of clinical decision making from other concepts. The defining attributes are related to the clinical decision-making ability of nurses that have already been published in journals. Three key defining attributes most frequently cited in the literature are clinical reasoning, choosing and applying challenging alternatives, and professional assessment and resetting (Oh et al., 2022). (Figure,1).

▪ **The first attribute** of nurses' clinical decision making, clinical reasoning, means holistic and comprehensive thinking that can solve the diverse and complex health problems of patients. It refers to the problem-solving ability needed to recognize the patient's health problems and predict the risks or benefits of the patient based on clinical intuition and an analytical approach. This is a holistic thinking ability essential for nurses that leads to the result of professional assessment and resetting, thereby having a positive effect on the patient's recovery and being exerted as a form of being connected with each other (Lee, Abdullah, Subramanian, Bachmann & Onq, 2017).

▪ **The second attribute** of nurses' clinical decision making, choosing and applying challenging alternatives, can be said to be a nurse's resource that enables nurse to have confidence in the patient's

health problem despite the changes it is undergoing, and to seek an alternative to achieve desirable results. In most studies, the nurses' selection and application of challenging alternatives based on their clinical experience corrected the patients' health problems, and the nurses themselves induced favorable adaptations to clinical practice with open and positive values (Jeffery, Novak, Kennedy, Dietrich & Mion, 2017).

▪ **The third attribute** of nurses' clinical decision making, professional assessment and resetting, are powerful activities that can allow nurses to actively and independently identify when a patient's complex health situation needs to be corrected or when a difficult problem or emergency situation is encountered. It refers to the redistribution of resources by collecting data on the priority health needs of the patient and his or her family and on the patient's disease, and revising the results. This is an important factor that enables nurses to flexibly cope with nursing in the clinical practice field and to eventually share their opinions with their fellow medical staff to form a social network. Above all, it is an essential element for improving nurses' nursing capacity (Son & Kim, 2018).

Antecedents

Antecedents are those factors that precede the occurrence of the concept (Walker & Avant, 2011). For the antecedents of nurses' clinical decision making, clinical judgment experience regarding the patient's health status, which is constantly changing and has high uncertainty and complexity, is important. Priority is given to the patient's health problem, and the
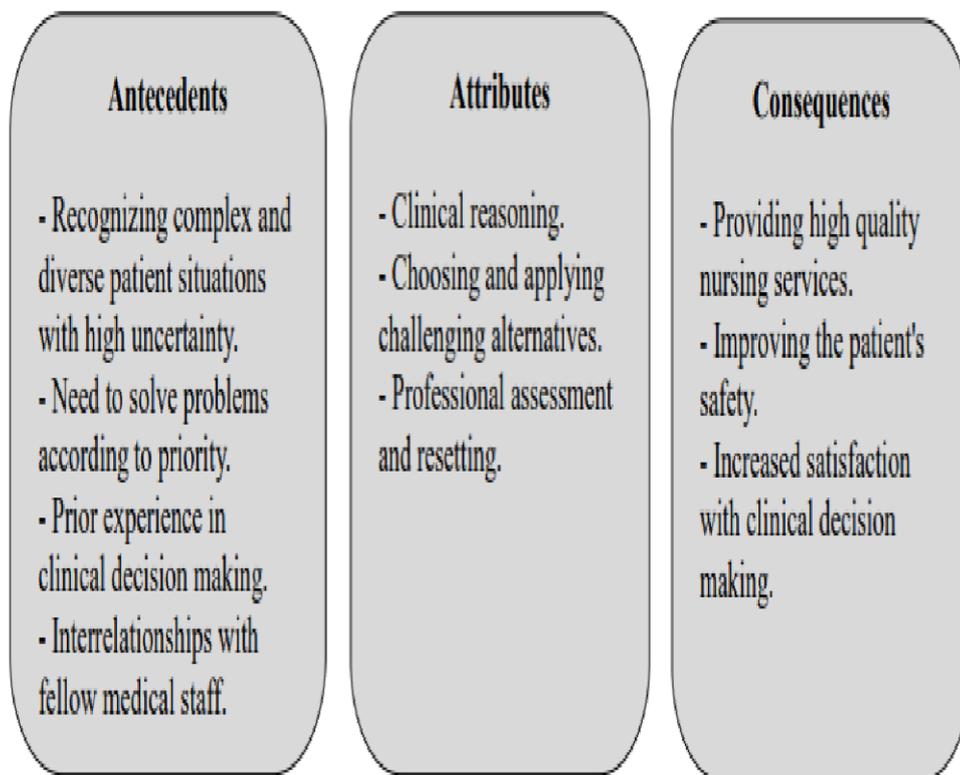
problem is predicted and treated through the nurses' interaction with their fellow medical staff. At the same time, improperly recognizing the situation and misidentifying the priorities can have a very negative impact on the patient's health problem (Nibbelink & Carrington, 2019).

Consequences

Consequences are the events or incidents that result from the occurrence of the concept. For the consequences of nurses' clinical

decision making, the patient's psychological well-being and comfort improves when provided with nursing. Thus, nurses' clinical decision-making ability acts as a positive predictor and makes patients think that they are receiving high-quality nursing services. As a result, nurses develop a sense of accomplishment and gain high satisfaction with their clinical decision making (Yu, Eun, White & Kang, 2019).

Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of clinical decision making.

Oh, S., Gu, M and Sok, S. (2022). A Concept Analysis of Nurses' Clinical Decision Making: Implications for Korea. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health, 19 (2), 1–12.

Empirical referents

The final step of concept analysis is determining the empirical referents by which the defining attributes can be recognized and measured (Walker & Avant, 2011). The empirical criteria for nurses' clinical decision making are the key competencies that nurses need

to be able to professionally grasp the priority problems of patients so as to resolve their health problems and to enhance their comfort, which nurses can acquire through prior nursing knowledge and experience and by improving their interactions with their fellow medical staff (Lim, (2016); Son & Kim, 2018).

Implications for Nursing

- All the previous relevant studies cited proper clinical decision making as a key competency of nurses.
- Proper clinical decision making by nurses has helped nurses flexibly cope with the changes in the clinical practice field and in the medical environment.
- Proper clinical decision making by nurses has helped them accomplish their tasks in crisis situations.
- When nurses encounter stress, adversity, or difficult problems, proper clinical decision making can give them the driving force to cause healthy behavior on the part of the patient.
- Proper clinical decision making, which can be considered the key competency of nurses, can improve nurses' self-efficacy, give them a sense of accomplishment and gain high satisfaction with their clinical decision making
- .Proper clinical decision making by nurses can increase the satisfaction of the society with the country's medical system, and maintains patients' well-being, which can boost patients' comfort and their desire for social adaptation
- Hospitals need to encourage periodic staff meeting between nurses and their supervisors to allow them express their feelings, seeking opinions, exchange their experiences during different situations and getting feedback and support.
- Hospitals need to represent nurses in hospital committees, sharing and participating in decision making about patients` problems and hospital policies.
- Nursing administrators and leaders should devise a program for staff nurses about decision making skills.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a nurse's clinical decision making is the nurse's intuitive ability to facilitate a healthy life for the patient, and it is to actively break through the crisis situation that appears to the patient and make a desirable choice for a challenging alternative. In addition, the nurse professionally assesses and solves problems for the safety of the patient.

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