

Managing Preoperative Anxiety among Patients Undergoing General Surgery

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Abstract

Anxiety before surgery is one of the most common problems that occurred in the hospitals. It is an emotional state for a temporary period characterized by feelings of sadness, nervousness, anxiety, stress, and increased activities of the autonomic nervous system. There are many causes for preoperative anxiety that include: prolonged length of hospital stay, lack of knowledge of the treatment plan, nature of the disease and causes of surgery. Managing preoperative anxiety requires the application of many nursing stress reduction strategies such as: providing preoperative information, preoperative nursing counseling, music therapy, and psychological support.

Keywords: Preoperative Anxiety; General Surgery

Introduction

Anxiety is an emotional state for a temporary period characterized by feelings of sadness, nervousness, and stress. Anxiety increases the activity of the involuntary autonomic nervous system that associated with stress and has psychological and physical adverse effects. The most important sources of anxiety during hospital treatment are pain, uncomfortable environment, disease symptoms and the fear from surgery [1-5]. Preoperative anxiety is one of the most common emotional responses that a patient may experience when performing a surgery.

Many factors may increase the level of anxiety before surgery in patients such as: prolong length of the hospital stay, the lack of knowledge about the treatment plan, the nature of the diseases, and the causes of surgery [6,7]. The low level of knowledge about the nature of the illness as well as the issue of surgery and the consequences are the main factors that may increase the levels of anxiety before and after surgery. Preoperative anxiety applies to most patients undergoing surgery regardless of their education or social background [8,9]. In addition, when preoperative sleep length was not sufficient for the patient it increased preoperative anxiety [10]. Preoperative anxiety may lead to many physiological changes such as increased heart rate, elevating blood pressure and a change in breathing pattern. Furthermore, preoperative anxiety may increase postoperative pain and delay recovery from anesthesia [10].

Aim of the Study

This paper aims to review the main literature about nursing interventions to reduce preoperative anxiety. Furthermore, supply evidence-based knowledge to health care providers on how to decrease preoperative anxiety of patients during the preoperative period.

Method

Search methods

The search was performed in several databases including: EBSCO and CINHALL, PubMed, SCHOLAR GOOGLE and MEDLINE. The keywords included "Preoperative anxiety", "general surgery". Papers published between 2008 and 2019 were obtained and their reference lists were scrutinized to identify secondary references, of these the ones published within the same 12 year period were also included. Those published in the English language that identified nursing intervention to reduce preoperative anxiety, were included in the review. Studies involving other health professionals were excluded, as well as studies that measure anxiety of variables other than general surgery. In addition, review articles, comments, editorials, letters, books, and thesis reports were excluded from this study.

Search outcome

A literature search yielded 1255 titles for review. The titles and summaries of these articles are presented according to the listing criteria. This final examination resulted in 12 articles, excluding articles consisting only of abstracts, review articles, and irrelevant articles.

Results and Discussion

The primary goal of nursing care before surgery is to maintain patient safety and to provide a high quality of care before, during and after the operation [11]. Patients who prepare psychologically and physically for the operation get better surgical results [12]. Many physical and psychological interventions can be made to reduce preoperative anxiety and avoid these problems [13]. These include many pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions which includes providing information, maintain contacts with patients, and providing other stress-reduction techniques such as music therapy, aromatherapy, essential oils, and relaxation techniques [14].

Preoperative education for patients undergoing surgery is one of the most effective ways to reduce preoperative anxiety. Preoperative education constitutes of any oral, written or audiovisual materials that help to understand the surgical procedure [15]. A preoperative education is one of the main interventions that nurses can do to provide physiological and emotional comfort and to relieve anxiety before surgery [16,17]. A preoperative nursing visit contains evaluating the patient's condition, documenting observation, listening to patient worry and responding to patient concerns [17]. In addition, using audiovisual material before surgery may raise the level of knowledge of the treatment and decreases the anxiety. Several studies about the effect of multimedia information before surgery demonstrated a significant reduction in the anxiety level among a patient undergoing surgeries [17]. For example, using educational videos have a major role in reducing patient's anxiety before surgery [18].

A study showed that patients who received preoperative education and verbal counseling before surgery have significant reduction of preoperative anxiety compared to patients who received basic information and routine preoperative care [19]. Another study reported that the patients who received education about the process of the surgery and reassurance before surgery have a lower level of anxiety compared with patients who receive no information [20]. In addition, the experimental group has more stable vital signs, less length of hospital stay, less postoperative pain, nausea, and vomiting compared with the control group [20].

Many studies found the positive effect of music therapy in reducing pre-operative anxiety [21]. Music therapy plays a significant role in stabilizing the nervous system. This condition may increase the patient's well-being, makes the patient feel more comfortable and reduce

the anxiety level [22]. Music therapy plays an important role in reducing anxiety before surgery. Numerous studies reported that the experimental group that was subjected to music therapy has lower level of anxiety compared with the control group. The researcher found a great difference in the level of the anxiety before and after the period of music intervention on the patient undergoing operation [23].

Conclusion

Preoperative anxiety is one of the most common problems that occurred in the hospital. There are many causes for preoperative anxiety that include length of hospital stay, lack of knowledge of about the treatment plan, the nature of the disease, and the causes of the surgery. Managing preoperative anxiety requires the application of many nursing interventions such as providing preoperative education, maintaining preoperative nursing counseling, providing audiovisual materials such as educational videos, and providing music therapy and psychological support. These nursing interventions may provide an evidence base practice to reduce preoperative anxiety. There is still uncertain certainty about the most effective nursing intervention that may relieve anxiety before surgery. Thus, more research is required for the most effective nursing intervention to reduce preoperative anxiety.

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