

Addressing the Psychological Challenges of Diabetes: Empowering Nurses to Provide Psychological First Aid

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Dear Editor

Type 2 diabetes (T2DM), one of the most common chronic diseases worldwide, has significant psychological effects on patients in addition to physical problems. The prevalence of diabetes is increasing, and it is predicted that the number of patients will reach 783.2 million by 2045.¹ Iran is no exception to this trend, and it is predicted that the number of diabetic patients in the country will reach 9.2 million by 2030.² Psychological aspects of diabetes, including stress, anxiety, and depression, have a significant impact on the quality of life of patients and highlight the need for psychological interventions in this field.³

Psychological Challenges of Diabetic Patients

Research has shown that anxiety, depression, and stress can disrupt blood sugar control and accelerate the progression of diabetes.⁴ Also, several studies have shown that a high percentage of diabetic patients suffer from psychological symptoms such as depression and stress. For example, one study found that 70% of diabetic patients may experience psychological problems.⁵ This high figure highlights the importance of psychological interventions, especially psychological first aid (PFA).

Role of Nurses in Providing Psychological First Aid

As the frontline of healthcare, nurses are essential in providing psychological support to diabetic patients. Psychological first aid means providing immediate psychological support to patients, which is especially important in critical moments.⁶ These measures include establishing empathetic communication, actively listening to the patient's problems, assessing the psychological state, and providing strategies for coping with stress and anxiety. These types of interventions can help improve patients' psychological state and, as a result, lead to better diabetes control.⁷

Operational Models for Nurses

The RAPID model is an effective method for providing psychological support to patients, which includes the steps of reflective listening, assessment of the current presentation, psychological triage, intervention, and disposition. These steps help nurses communicate effectively with patients, reduce their psychological distress, and improve their quality of life.⁸ Training nurses and other health care providers in these models can reduce patients' anxiety and create a supportive environment. Asking open-ended questions, such as "How can I help you?", also allows patients to express their feelings more effectively.⁹

Importance of Taking Care of Nurses' Mental Health

It is also essential to take care of nurses' mental health. Providing continuous care to diabetic patients may lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, ongoing education and practice of self-care techniques are of great importance for nurses to maintain their mental health. This not only helps to improve the quality of services but also increases job satisfaction and reduces burnout.¹⁰

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Conclusion

Given the increasing prevalence of diabetes and its psychological effects on patients, training nurses in psychological first aid can be an essential part of comprehensive and integrated care. This training not only helps improve the quality of life of diabetic patients but also increases the efficiency of the healthcare system. These skills must be included in the training courses of nurses and other healthcare providers.

Conflict of Interest

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