**Effect of an Instructional Package of Ethics on Nurses' Performance at the Obstetrical Units**

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**Abstract**

**Background:**

Ethics is an essential dimension in obstetrical and gynecological nursing practice. Ethical issues that arise in the care of women are challenging to nurses, physicians, politicians, lawyers, and ethicists alike. Ethical principles that guide ethical action include four primary moral principles: respect for *beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice,* and *autonomy*, which upholds the rights of women and their families

**Aim :** the aim of his study was to explore the effect of an ethical instructional package on nurses’ performance in obstetrical units.

**Design : A** pre and post intervention study design was carried out.

**Setting :** obstetrical units at Tanta University Hospital

**Sample :** A total number of 40 nurses **working in the above mentioned setting .**

**Tools of data collection:** A self-administered questionnaire and an observation checklist were used for data collection. An instructional package in nursing ethics in obstetrics and gynecology was prepared by the researchers and. The effect of the intervention was assessed by comparing post- and follow-up tests with pre-test.

**Results:** Nurses showed a mean score of pre-intervention deficient knowledge, negative attitude, and unsatisfied practices in all areas of ethical issues and principles at obstetrical units. Statistically significant improvements in the total scores were shown in all three parameters at the post-test (p<0.001). The decline at the follow-up was most prominent in nurses' practices,

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decreasing from a score of 62.1% to a score of 48% However, still the scores of knowledge, attitude, and practice remained positively statistically significantly higher compared with pre-intervention scores (p<0.001). Furthermore positive significant relations were found between nurses' total score levels of knowledge and performance regarding nursing ethical issues and nurses' level of education and also their years of experience.

**Conclusion & Recommendations:** The study concludes that the use of an instructional package can improve nurses' knowledge, attitude, and practices related to ethics in obstetric nursing care, although declined with time. Therefore, the use of this training method needs to be complemented with booster sessions to reinforce the knowledge and skills acquired by participants. Also, further research is suggested using a randomized trial design with blind assessment of the outcomes.

**Key words:** Ethics, Nursing ethics, Instructional package, Obstetrics 2

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**INTRODUCTION**

Ethics is an integral part of the foundations of nursing. Nursing ethics shares many similarities with medical ethics, and both may be lumped under the umbrella of biomedical ethics. However, the nature of nursing makes nursing ethics more geared towards "caring" rather than "curing", meaning that the nurse should not focus on medical treatments and ignore the needs of the patient, but should center the patient's needs and desires when developing care plans ***(Pomari, 2009)***.

In essence, nursing ethics is a set of shared values or principles that govern the way nurses interact and deal with patients, a patient's family, and even doctors and other nurses. Professional ethics guarantees clinical competency and leads to the application of specialized knowledge and skill by nurses ***(Vanaki &Memarian, 2009)***. The ethical principles that guide ethical action include four primary moral principles that uphold the rights of individuals and families. These are namely beneficence, non-maleficence*,* justice, and autonomy. Beneficence is the obligation to do well, as compared to non-maleficence*,* which is the obligation to do no harm. These two principles should be considered in relation to healthcare technology that has the ability to sustain life without accurate predictions of long-term outcomes. Justice is the principle of treating everyone fairly through providing comparative and equitable treatment ***(Avasthi et al, 2013)***.

In obstetric and gynecologic nursing, nurses seek to defend the dignity of women under their care. In terms of standard ethical theory, this is aligned with having a respect for women and their autonomous choices. They are then enabled to make decisions about their own treatment ***(Page k, 2012)***. This grounds the practice of informed consent that should be respected by the nurse. Other principles 3

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important in interactions with women and children and their families as well as healthcare professionals include fidelity*,* veracity, confidentiality*,* and privacy. Fidelity is the obligation to keep commitments. Veracity is the obligation to demonstrate integrity and truth-telling, disclosing to women and their families accurate information regarding the relative risks and benefits of health management ***(Abou-Mrad, 2010)***.

Furthermore, obstetrician-gynecologists as well as obstetrical nurses now face complex ethical questions regarding assisted reproductive technologies, prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion, medical care at the beginning and end of life, the use of genetic information, and the like ***(Murphy, 2012; Gerrits et al, 2013)***. Medical and nursing knowledge alone is not sufficient to solve these problems. Instead, responsible decisions in these areas depend on a thoughtful consideration of the values, interests, goals, rights, and obligations of those involved. All of these are the concern of medical and nursing ethics, which in turn help to resolve ethical dilemmas.

**Significance of the study:**

In Egypt, although there is no specific ethical code regulating nursing practice, yet there are several resources that provide the base for professional conduct in congruence with the universal standards. Tanta University Hospital, as many other similar Egyptian settings, lacks guidelines for obstetrical nursing ethics. Hence, the researchers though of developing and using an instruction package as a method for providing designed instructional activities that guide the learner in achieving the objectives of learning. 4

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**Aim of the study**

The aim of the study was to explore the effect of an ethical instructional package on nurses’ performance in obstetrical units.

were that the application of the obstetrical **The research hypothesis** age will lead to statistically significant ethical instructional packimprovements in nurses' knowledge, attitude and practices as related to ethical issues and principles in obstetric nursing care.

**Statistical analysis:** Data entry and statistical analysis were done using SPSS 16.0 statistical software package. The total scores of knowledge, attitude, and practice between pre-post and pre-follow-up phases were compared using Student t-test. Qualitative categorical variables were compared using chi-square test. Whenever the expected values in one or more of the cells in a 2x2 tables was less than 5, Fisher exact test was used instead. Statistical significance was considered at 9

p-value <0.05 **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study results lead to the conclusion that the use of an instructional package can improve nurses' knowledge, attitude, and practices related to ethics in obstetric nursing care. However, the improvements were small although statistically significant, and declined with time. Therefore, the use of this training method needs to be complemented with booster sessions to reinforce the knowledge and skills acquired by participants. The study however has the limitation of a 20

possible observer's bias, in addition to the lack of control group. Hence, suggested using a randomized trial design with blind further research is.assessment of the outcomes.