

Guide to Good Nursing Practice Health Assessment

Preamble

Health assessment is an essential nursing function which provides foundation for quality nursing care and intervention. It helps to identify the strengths of the clients in promoting health. Health assessment also helps to identify client's needs, clinical problems or nursing diagnoses and to evaluate responses of the person to health problems and intervention (Fuller & Schaller-Ayers, 2000). An accurate and thorough health assessment reflects the knowledge and skills of a professional nurse.

Definition

Health assessment is a systematic, deliberative and interactive process by which nurses use critical thinking to collect, validate, analyze and synthesize the collected information in order to make judgement about the health status and life processes of individuals, families and communities.

Principles

In planning and performing health assessment, the nurse needs to consider the following:

1. An accurate and timely health assessment provides foundation for nursing care and intervention.
2. A comprehensive assessment incorporates information about a client's physiologic, psychosocial, spiritual health, cultural and environmental factors as well as client's developmental status.
3. The health assessment process should include data collection, documentation and evaluation of the client's health status and responses to health problems and intervention.
4. All documentation should be objective, accurate, clear, concise, specific and current.
5. Health assessment is practised in all healthcare settings whenever there is nurse-client interaction.
6. Information gathered from health assessment should be communicated to other health care professionals in order to facilitate collaborative management of clients and for continuity of care.
7. Client's confidentiality should be kept.

Responsibilities of the nurse

1. The nurse has the responsibility to carry out health assessment on every person under his/her care.
2. The nurse should regularly perform focused assessments in response to client needs.
3. The nurse needs to obtain client's consent prior to health assessment.
4. The nurse should demonstrate a caring attitude, respect and concern for each client when doing a health assessment.
5. The nurse has the responsibility in keeping confidentiality about the data being collected from his/her client.
6. The nurse obtains information on a client using various techniques and tools, such as history taking, physical examination, reviewing clients' records and results of diagnostic tests. He/She has to draw inferences from data collected in order to make appropriate

and sound clinical judgement.

7. The nurse has to acquire specialized skills and competence in collecting accurate and relevant information on the patient's health in performing health assessment in order to make sound clinical decisions.
8. The nurse should document the results of health assessment, analyze the data collected, evaluate the client's response to health problems and interventions, and provide feedback to the client as appropriate.
9. The nurse should continuously advance their competence in health assessment throughout one's nursing career.
10. The nurse who takes up an advanced practice role has the responsibility to prepare himself/herself in order to perform advanced and focused health assessment.

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Working Group Members

Convenor: Ms Beatrice LAW, Sau Po Centre on Aging, University of Hong Kong
Member: Ms Josephine LI, Co-opted Member of the Professional Development
Committee of the Nursing Council of Hong Kong
Dr. TONG Wah-kun, Princess Margaret Hospital
Mr. Edwin TSANG, Fung Yiu King Hospital

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