

Poster Session II

#16

Safe Care and Nursing: A Conceptual Consideration

Margaret C. Oakes, RN, MBA, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA

Purpose: The aim of this article is to review and analyze the literature regarding the concept of safe care over the past sixty years in order to clarify its meaning and explore possible implications for nursing practice or knowledge development in the future.

Background: Safe care has been a topic of interest to nurses for nearly sixty years and is congruent with the extensive interest in patient safety in the health care delivery system that developed over the past decade or longer. The concept of “safe care” is poorly delineated despite its frequent use in the nursing and medical literature.

Methods: The Rodgers evolutionary concept analysis approach was used. A search of the full literature of PubMed and CINAHL for all items written or translated into English for available dates using the key words “safe care” and the words “safe care” in the title was performed. Data also was collected by hand search. Of the 84 unique items identified 52 articles published between 1951 and 2010 received full review. Following the initial concept analysis, searches of the keywords “patient safety,” and “nursing theory” were conducted.

Results: Interest in and concern about safe care in clinical practice has burgeoned over time, and grew exponentially from 1980-2010. While safe care currently is of interest generally among health care professionals, for as long as it has been written about, it has been a concern of nurses. The earlier articles were written by nurses only and discussed safe care as individual and contextual. Beginning in the 1990’s safe care began to be conceptualized as the product of a system, and core nursing values such as individual caring no longer were mentioned.

Conclusions and Implications: There is no clear definition of safe care. With the advent of the patient safety movement in the US starting in the 1990’s safe care became a topic of general interest unsupported by a theoretical nursing construct. In order for the core nursing principles to be considered alongside other concerns as safer systems are created, the definition of safe care must take into account the point of view of nurses. New nursing knowledge regarding safe care is needed.