Short Communication

Psychiatric Nursing- A Booming Nursing Discipline

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Nursing career has a projected growth rate of 15% by 2026, which is more than twice the average, as per the statistics of Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). As there are so many opportunities for career growth and many specializations in the nursing discipline it's becoming a booming field worldwide.

Psychiatric Nursing and mental health nursing is gaining popularity in the nursing field. Though mental health patients are being treated by psychologists, psychiatrist or mental health counsellers, the role of psychiatric nurses play a vital role in the mental health or psychiatric care treatment.

According to the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANPs), as of 2016, there are over 222,000 licensed nurse practitioners in the US out of which, only 2.4 percent have specialized in psychiatric or mental health practice for adults, while three percent handle family-related cases. In total, about 11,988 nurse practitioners currently focus on psychiatric and mental health cases in the USA.

With the increasing demand for Psychiatric and mental health nursing professionals across the world, this field has much potential for growth and has already started to experience an exponential increase in demand.

By definition, Psychiatric nursing is defined as a "Specialty concerned with the application of psychiatric principles and nursing care provided in caring for the mentally ill patient".

Psychiatric nursing is otherwise defined as a branch of nursing that is concerned with the prevention, care and cure of mental disorders, using the theories of human behavior.

The vital activities of psychiatric nurses include, providing safe therapeutic procedures to the patients or clients on the day –to-day problems they face. This also include identifying the drug therapy reactions, conducting psychotherapy, clinical assistance and moral supports.

There are two main broad categories in this specialty branch

- Psychiatric Nursing and
- Mental Health Nursing.

Psychiatric Nursing

According to the American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA), psychiatric nurses are experts in crisis intervention, mental health assessment, medication and therapy, and patient assistance.

The vital role and responsibility of Psychiatric nurses is, they have to work closely with the mentally ill patients to help them manage their mental illnesses, fulfilling their lives and make their live productive.

Psychiatric nursing is the basis of all nursing which is built on therapeutic communication and relationship development. As a core healthcare profession, and due to increasing access for both general and vulnerable populations, psychiatric nursing provides primary mental-health care in the private and public sectors.

Psychiatric Nurses normally interviewing, interacting and assessing a new mentally ill patient who has any of the following disorders:

- Anxiety disorders, like panic attacks and phobias;
- Mood disorders, including bipolar disorder and depression;
- Issues with substance abuse, such as drugs and alcohol; or,
- Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

This is to learn about their history, daily habits, symptoms and treatments if any they have been taking.

It is very imperative that, the Psychiatric Nurses work close with the medications and treatment teams to have a individualized patient plans so as to have a high degree of medical and psychological

care. Psychiatric Nurses also provide individual counseling to patients and families to help them understand the illness. Depending on the situation, nurses may also help patients dress, groom, and take their medications.

The following diagram depicts the career scope of psychiatric nursing
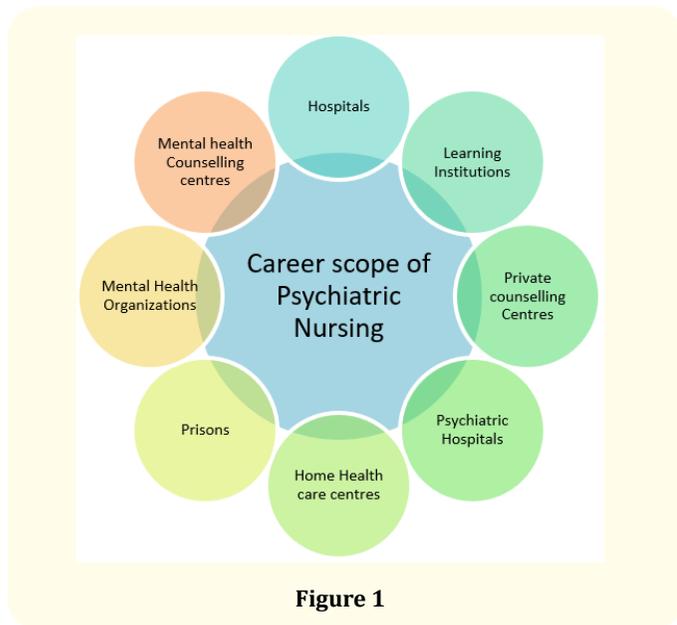

Figure 1

Psychiatric nurses are very much in demand as of today. They are needed as a faculty in the universities and education institutions, as a practitioner collaborating in many other disciplines including emergency departments, schools, primary-care settings, general medical units, patient's homes, long-term care facilities, and prisons.

Mental Health Nursing

According to WHO 1998, mental health nursing is concerned with the prevention, treatment and nursing care of people of all ages who are suffering from mental illness and its effects.

Despite steady and continuing improvements in health care and living conditions in many countries of the world, extended life expectancy and improved economic growth have brought an increase in the numbers of people who are suffering from mental illness.

Mental health nurses work closely with patients who have mental health illness. Mental health nurses should have expertise in assessing, diagnosing and treating the psychiatric problems.

The more common work area of mental health nurses are
- Evaluating mental health needs of patients
- Developing treatment plans

- Providing psychotherapy services
- Providing personal care
- Coordinating with families, doctors, and other health professionals
- Administering medications

In order to bring down the disability, morbidity and mortality, due to mental illness, a mental health Nurse should be appropriately educated, having a good knowledge base along with special skills on caring the patients using new technologies for clinical judgments. A mental Health Nurse must be autonomous in action and has to be a part of a multidisciplinary health care team.

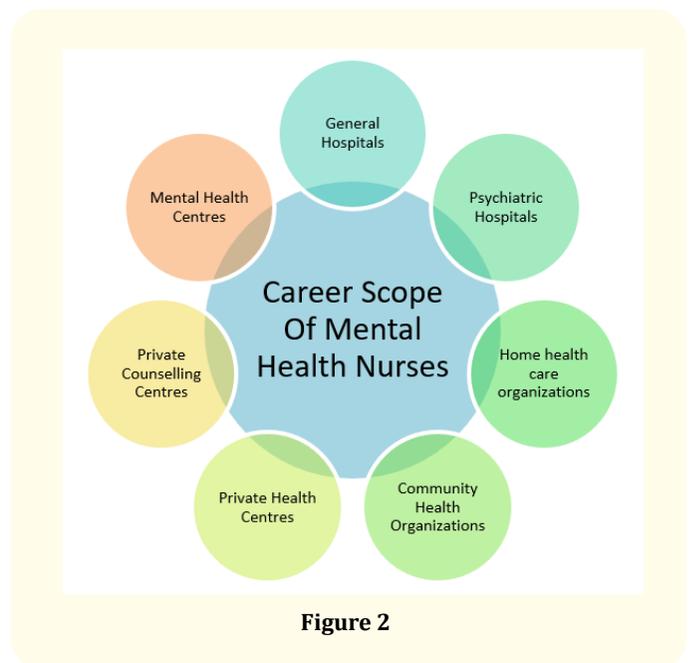The following is the work scope of Mental Health Nursing

Figure 2

It is therefore understood that, the nursing education and placements have a great responsibility in shaping the attitudes of nursing students towards people with mental disorders. It is very vital to provide enough knowledge and education, both theoretical and practical knowledge, to a Psychiatric Nurse and Mental Health Nurse for them to subsequently prepare for a nursing profession in the mental health field. Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurses being on the practice front, it is thus imperative that nurses have a positive attitude towards patients who have mental disorders.