

## EDITORIAL



# Supporting Health Care Workers beyond COVID-19

In the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted people's lives, affecting health, socio-economic and cultural aspects. The impact is not only limited to the current time but is expected to make ripples into the future. As we cope with the challenges brought by COVID-19, the fact remains that the previous health problems and concerns pre-pandemic still exist. These challenges need to be addressed even as we face an uncertain future, with possible new variants of COVID-19, health workforce shortages, mental health issues, workplace safety, and the threat of emergencies and disasters.

This issue of the Philippine Journal of Nursing gives us a chance to look into existing health and social concerns that impact the health and lives of Filipinos. There are eight original research papers in nursing. These research papers contribute to nursing literature by providing new perspectives from a developing country and offering new insights and possible solutions to old problems.

### Some interesting research studies that look into special groups are featured.

Catalan and Luna presented *humanistic caring - an approach for meeting the care needs of Filipino gay and lesbian older persons* emphasizing the need for extensive gender-care training for gerontological nurses. It was suggested to be incorporated in the nursing curriculum to address gender-care disparities in the caring dynamics.

Tupaz and Balabagno explored the association of *spirituality and quality of life among Filipino patients with cancer*. Filipino patients in the study had high spiritual well-being despite the presence of cancer, showing their highest spiritual well-being in the transcendental domain which describes one's relationship with God. Patient characteristics, especially their illness profile, are recommended to be considered in developing nursing interventions that may improve their spiritual well-being.

### Studies among professional nurses are also shared.

In a tertiary hospital, Gatbunton evaluated the level of *knowledge and compliance of nurses on standard precautions and their general self-efficacy*. Findings reveal that nurses have a good knowledge and high compliance concerning standard precautions, and they have a moderate level of general self-

efficacy. However, there was no significant relationship between the level of knowledge, level of compliance in standard precautions, and general self-efficacy.

Nurses working in reproductive health services were also part of the study of Alberto who implemented a *sexual health intervention for couples with difficulty practicing sexual abstinence* in natural family planning. Results showed that change of sexual scripting, coupled with mind setting plus communication, facilitates partnership and adherence leading to successful sexual abstinence. Further, the study concluded that enhanced sexual intercourse happens if there are acceptance and openness to life, full trust in the observation, and recording of fertility, as well as respect to self and spouse.

### Some studies were focused on college students.

Catu looked into *perceived social support from family, friends, and spiritual experiences as correlates of depression*. Statistically, significant relationships were found between depression and perceived support from friends and spiritual experiences, but no significant relationship between depression and support from family. The study concluded that supporting freshmen students is important, especially peer support and spiritual experience. De Torres *et al.* studied the *development and effect of the online HIV prevention and care training program for student nurses*. The online HIV Prevention and Care Training (HPCT) program showed positive effects on student nurses' knowledge, attitude, and perceived practices. The study concluded that there is a need to highlight and integrate the basic HIV concepts and developments in the education of student nurses.

### Some studies are about professional nurses and their workplaces.

As students become professional nurses, there is still a need to support their journey to professionalism.

Cummings *et al.* describe the *lived experience of new graduate registered nurses as they transition to become professional nurses*. They revealed that new graduate nurses continue to feel overwhelmed and they need structured guidance in their professional transition training programs. The study showed that transition programs, such as structured residency and prolonged orientations assist them to adjust to the work environment.

Working from home has been the norm in the COVID-19 pandemic. Selludo-Ballena *et al.* conducted a survey on *health-promoting lifestyle behaviors among university employees in a work-from-home arrangement*. The study showed that the majority of the respondents practice good health-promoting lifestyle behaviors such as social and coping skills, but with limitations on opportunities for a more active lifestyle, availability of nutritious food, and access to health care. There is a need for health promotion and protection strategies such as nurse-led health programs in the aspects of nutrition, physical activity, and health responsibility.

**This journal issue also features concept analyses from nurses who are giving us glimpses of future research in nursing.** Concept analysis is done to determine the defining attributes or characteristics of the concept/s under study. It helps in refining and clarifying concepts, in theory, practice, and research towards defining a conceptual framework and/or instrument development for full research proposal preparation.

One of the concepts presented is the *reintegration of patients* requiring different modalities of care and treatment programs as they journey towards recovery. Tubaña points to the need to define reintegration and measure its attributes as a contribution to literature to improve nursing care and health outcomes.

*Role modeling* is another important concept as nurse educators, staff nurses, and managers act as the primary role model of neophyte nurses. Pugrad identified that the antecedents of role modeling are the role of aspirants' ideas and perspectives and the role model's experiences.

Stigmatization of nurses as they care for patients, especially during the COVID-19 surges, add to the psychological stress of nurses. Fagarang states that this merit further study to support nurses to improve patients' health, longevity, and quality of life through the provision of patient-centered care.

Reflection on *developing a professional identity* traces the systematic development of professional nurses as they advance in practice from the undergraduate to the graduate programs. Co-Enarciso's paper asserts that transformation in power and responsibility requires the development of needed competence in nursing, knowledge, skill, attitude, including ethical grounding that will directly affect the care provided to individuals, both sick and well.

The concept of *fitness nursing*, according to Almazan, has not been fully defined in the nursing profession but has slowly emerged due to the increasing interest of people in a healthy lifestyle. He defined fitness nursing can be defined as the combined science of nursing with the art of personal training that focuses on health promotional activities and disease prevention through physical fitness.

The defining attributes are physical training and health coaching and outcomes can be measured at the individual or community level.

The *family caregiver* concept is also presented by Javison to clarify the idea of caring for family carers and identify family caregivers' vulnerability in inpatient care. The collaboration between nursing, multidisciplinary teams, and family carers is seen to contribute to the immediate recovery of patients and smooth transition to home care.

**Another important segment in this journal is the Nurses' Voices From the Field – from the academe to practice.** Two reflections on important issues in nursing education and practice are featured in this journal.

So shared how the nursing academic environment nurtured a responsive learning environment with technological caring, relational practice, and professional resilience, thereby preparing students to be responsive to an ever-changing work environment.

Tasijawa also shared their web-based learning platform as classes shifted online in Indonesia emphasizing the need for faculty to keep updated with technology.

**A special poem, entitled Scarred Heroes, is offered by Narvaez.** It is a fitting tribute to nurses and other frontline health care workers who continued to serve and care for patients amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has made a tremendous impact on the health system. It has disrupted health services in hospitals and the community. It has exposed weaknesses in the health system including poor/unsafe work environments, inadequate staffing levels, low pay, and lack of career opportunities. The impact of COVID-19 will certainly be continuously felt in the coming years.

There is a need to review the impact of COVID-19 on nursing education and evaluate the innovations in teaching and learning that many schools adopted to continue the lessons amidst the lockdowns and lack of face-to-face classes. Nursing practice has been dealt with even more stresses with the surge in cases and the high burden of illness, prompting changes in the types of services provided and new challenges to the health workforce. Nurses have experienced a high level of stress due to workload, demands, and infection risks. More researches with multiple perspectives need to be encouraged to determine the actual needs and challenges in the field.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need, more than ever, to conduct and support health and nursing research. We hope that as we create a new normal in nursing education and practice, we learn from our research and base our actions on the implications derived from them.



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