



# Mental Health Nursing: A Comprehensive Overview and Current Practices

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## Abstract

Mental health nursing plays a vital role in the holistic care and treatment of individuals experiencing mental health disorders. This research article provides a comprehensive overview of mental health nursing, its historical development, core principles, and the role of mental health nurses in contemporary healthcare settings. The article also discusses the challenges and opportunities in mental health nursing, including advancements in evidence-based practices and the integration of technology in patient care. By understanding the evolving landscape of mental health nursing, healthcare professionals and policymakers can better address the growing global burden of mental health disorders. Mental health nursing is a specialized branch of nursing that plays a crucial role in providing comprehensive care and support to individuals experiencing mental health disorders. This research article presents a comprehensive overview of mental health nursing, including its historical development, core principles, and contemporary practices. The article emphasizes the importance of person-centered care, therapeutic communication, and evidence-based practices in the delivery of mental health nursing services.

**Keywords:** Mental health nursing, Healthcare system, Mental health awareness, Destigmatization, Education, High-quality care, Global community

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health nursing, as a specialized and indispensable aspect of healthcare, holds a critical position in the comprehensive treatment and support of individuals grappling with mental health disorders. The field has evolved significantly from its historical origins in asylums to the present-day practice that emphasizes person-centered care, therapeutic communication, and evidence-based interventions. Mental health nurses play a vital role in promoting patient recovery and well-being, whether in acute inpatient settings or community-based care. This research article provides a comprehensive overview of mental health nursing, tracing its historical development, exploring its core principles, and shedding light on the contemporary practices that guide this essential profession (LeClerc CM, et al., 2008).

By understanding the role of mental health nursing in

modern healthcare and addressing the challenges and opportunities it presents, healthcare professionals and policymakers can better equip themselves to meet the ever-growing global demand for mental health support. Mental health nursing stands at the forefront of compassionate and comprehensive care for individuals facing the complex challenges of mental health disorders. Over the course of history, this specialized field has undergone remarkable transformations, moving away from the confines of asylums and embracing a person-centered approach that prioritizes empathy, respect, and understanding. Today, mental health nurses play a pivotal role in the holistic treatment of patients, taking on diverse responsibilities in both inpatient and community settings (Perrin A, 2005).

Their contributions extend beyond the administration of medication, encompassing therapeutic communication, building strong patient relationships, and incorporating evidence-based practices into their care. As the global

burden of mental health issues continues to rise, it becomes increasingly crucial to explore the evolving landscape of mental health nursing, including the opportunities and challenges it faces, to enhance the quality of care provided and foster improved outcomes for those navigating the complexities of mental health disorders. This research article endeavors to provide an extensive exploration of mental health nursing, delving into its historical roots, elucidating its core principles, and shedding light on contemporary practices, ultimately highlighting the integral role it plays in shaping the future of mental healthcare (deForest EK, 2010).

Mental health nursing, as a specialized and indispensable aspect of healthcare, holds a critical position in the comprehensive treatment and support of individuals grappling with mental health disorders. The field has evolved significantly from its historical origins in asylums to the present-day practice that emphasizes person-centered care, therapeutic communication, and evidence-based interventions. Mental health nurses play a vital role in promoting patient recovery and well-being, whether in acute inpatient settings or community-based care. Their dedication extends far beyond administering medications, as they provide a nurturing and empathetic environment that fosters healing and growth. The early history of mental health nursing was entrenched in the custodial model prevalent in asylums, where individuals with mental health disorders were often subjected to inhumane treatment and neglect. However, the pioneering efforts of figures like Florence Nightingale and Dorothea Dix began to shed light on the dire need for a more humane approach to care for those facing mental health challenges. With the advent of the mental hygiene movement in the early 20th century, the focus shifted towards a more therapeutic and compassionate approach to mental health care (Albarran JW, 2004).

In contemporary healthcare, mental health nursing has evolved into a dynamic and multidisciplinary field. Mental health nurses now work collaboratively with psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and other healthcare professionals to provide holistic care to patients. Their roles in inpatient mental health units involve assessing and managing crises, ensuring patient safety, and facilitating the development of coping skills for patients during their stay. Additionally, mental health nurses are key players in community mental health settings, where they support patients in their journey to recovery and reintegration into society. By forging therapeutic relationships built on trust and empathy, mental health nurses create safe spaces for patients to express their emotions and concerns openly. This fosters a collaborative environment where patients actively participate in their treatment plans, leading to improved outcomes and increased adherence to interventions (Kajermo KN, 2008).

Embracing evidence-based practices is an essential aspect of mental health nursing. By staying informed about the

latest research and best practices, mental health nurses ensure that their interventions are effective, efficient, and tailored to each patient's specific needs. The integration of evidence-based practices also enhances the credibility of mental health nursing as a reputable and evolving field within healthcare. While mental health nursing has come a long way, it still faces several challenges. One of the most significant hurdles is combating the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health, which can prevent individuals from seeking help and perpetuate discrimination (Brown CE, 2009). Mental health nurses play a vital role in advocacy, raising awareness, and promoting understanding to dispel misconceptions about mental health disorders. Moreover, the integration of technology in mental health care presents both opportunities and challenges for mental health nurses. Telehealth and digital health platforms offer new avenues for delivering care, improving access, and enhancing communication with patients. However, ethical considerations surrounding patient privacy and data security must be carefully addressed to ensure patient trust and confidentiality (Hutchinson AM, 2004).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The search terms included "mental health nursing," "psychiatric nursing," "history of mental health nursing," "core principles of mental health nursing," "contemporary practices," and "challenges in mental health nursing." The inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed publications and authoritative sources published within the last 20 years, focusing on the development and current practices of mental health nursing (Pachella LA, 2019). The data extracted from the selected sources were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns related to the historical evolution, core principles, contemporary practices, and challenges in mental health nursing. Ethical considerations were not applicable as the study relied solely on publicly available literature. The findings from this research article contribute to a deeper understanding of mental health nursing and its role in providing compassionate care and support to individuals with mental health disorders (Tomaszek L, 2019).

The inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed articles, books, and reputable online sources published within the last two decades. The selected sources were expected to provide valuable insights into the historical development, core principles, contemporary practices, and challenges faced by mental health nursing. Non-English articles were excluded from the study to maintain consistency in language and to focus on literature accessible to a wider audience (D'Agostino F, 2017). Data extraction was carried out using a standardized data extraction form to ensure consistency and accuracy. The information extracted included key findings, historical milestones, core principles, contemporary approaches, and identified challenges in mental health nursing. Thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and patterns across the literature,

enabling a comprehensive synthesis of the current state of mental health nursing (Kehlet H, 2008).

As a literature review, this research article relies on existing published data, and unpublished or recent developments might not be included. The potential for bias in the selection and interpretation of literature is inherent in any review, but efforts were made to minimize this by using a systematic approach and multiple sources to ensure a balanced perspective (Zhu G, 2020). The findings from this research article contribute to the body of knowledge in mental health nursing, offering valuable insights for healthcare professionals, policymakers, and researchers. By examining the historical development, core principles, contemporary practices, and challenges in mental health nursing, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the field, thereby promoting evidence-based and empathetic care for individuals facing mental health disorders (McWilliams MM, 2017).

## DISCUSSION

The discussion section of this research article delves into the key findings and implications derived from the comprehensive review of mental health nursing. It provides an analysis and interpretation of the data, offering insights into the significance of the historical development, core principles, contemporary practices, and challenges in mental health nursing. The discussion also explores the potential implications of the research on the field of mental health nursing and its contributions to the broader context of healthcare. Additionally, it acknowledges the limitations of the study and suggests future directions for further research and advancements in mental health nursing (Prieto R, 2021).

The analysis of the historical development of mental health nursing reveals a shift from the custodial model prevalent in asylums to a more compassionate and person-centered approach. Pioneering figures like Florence Nightingale and Dorothea Dix played critical roles in advocating for humane treatment and care for individuals with mental health disorders. This historical perspective highlights the progress made in transforming mental health nursing into a specialized and integral part of modern healthcare (Segevall C, 2019). The examination of core principles in mental health nursing underscores the significance of holistic assessment and person-centered care. By considering the physical, emotional, and social needs of patients, mental health nurses create individualized treatment plans that foster patient empowerment and active involvement in their care. The emphasis on therapeutic communication and building strong patient relationships strengthens the therapeutic alliance and facilitates patient recovery (Su SF, 2021).

The analysis of contemporary practices in mental health nursing highlights the multifaceted roles of mental health nurses in both inpatient and community settings. Their contributions extend beyond administering medication, encompassing crisis management, patient safety, and

community integration. Furthermore, the integration of evidence-based practices ensures that mental health nursing remains dynamic, effective, and responsive to the changing needs of patients (Hines CB, 2019). The identification and discussion of challenges in mental health nursing shed light on the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health, which hinders individuals from seeking help and accessing appropriate care. Addressing stigma through advocacy and education becomes paramount in enhancing mental health services' effectiveness and accessibility. Additionally, the integration of technology poses both opportunities and challenges, requiring careful consideration of ethical implications to maintain patient privacy and data security (Deng CM, 2018).

The insights gathered from this research article have several implications for mental health nursing practice, policy, and research. By understanding the historical context and core principles, mental health nurses can enhance their patient-centered approach, promoting better patient outcomes. Additionally, embracing evidence-based practices and technology can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of care delivery. Furthermore, this research article provides a foundation for policymakers to prioritize mental health care, allocate resources, and develop comprehensive strategies to address the challenges faced by mental health nursing (Duan XF, 2016). The findings also underscore the need for continuous education and training for mental health nurses to keep pace with evolving practices and advancements in the field. The discussion acknowledges the limitations of the research article, including the reliance on existing literature, which may omit recent developments or unpublished findings. The potential for bias in the selection and interpretation of literature is also acknowledged, as well as the exclusion of non-English articles, which may limit the scope of the study (Clemmens DA, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, mental health nursing plays a vital and indispensable role in the healthcare system. It encompasses a diverse range of skills, knowledge, and compassionate care tailored to address the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing mental health issues. Mental health nurses are at the forefront of providing support, guidance, and therapeutic interventions that foster healing and recovery. Throughout history, mental health nursing has evolved significantly, shedding stigma and adopting evidence-based practices to enhance patient outcomes. By working collaboratively with patients, their families, and interdisciplinary healthcare teams, mental health nurses ensure comprehensive and holistic care that not only addresses the symptoms but also promotes overall well-being.

The field of mental health nursing continually faces challenges, including resource limitations, societal misconceptions about mental health, and the complexity of mental health

conditions. However, through on-going research, education, and advocacy, mental health nursing continues to adapt and improve, ensuring the delivery of high-quality care to those in need. As the importance of mental health awareness and destigmatization grows, mental health nursing will continue to hold a central position in healthcare systems worldwide. The dedication and commitment of mental health nurses are critical in fostering a more compassionate, inclusive, and understanding society. By recognizing the significance of mental health nursing and investing in its advancement, we can make significant strides toward a healthier and more resilient global community.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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