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ARE SRI LANKAN NURSES ADEQUATELY PREPARED TO CARE FOR WOMEN SUBJECTED TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE?

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious public health and social problem. Although women survivors of IPV visit hospitals, their health problems associated with IPV often go unnoticed. Nurses are in a key position to identify and help women address their health concerns. Inadequacy of educational preparation of Sri Lankan nurses to play the above role was highlighted in a previous study. This paper is based on a preliminary study to further describe current training of nurses in caring for women experiencing IPV. Nursing curricula from 24 institutions: 17 government Schools of Nursing (SON), the Post-Basic College of Nursing (PBCN) and 06 state universities, were reviewed using a pre-tested data collection form. A senior teacher was identified from each institution as a contact person to obtain information and clarifications. Completed forms (24) were received by mail. Content analysis of data was carried out. None of the curricula at Diploma and Post-Basic Diploma/Certificate level included contents related to IPV. However, out of 17 SON, nine reported to have conducted 2-12 hour sessions related to IPV by inviting guest speakers. Similarly, three of the PBCN courses have addressed the topic by inviting guest speakers. Two of the six universities reported having 2-8 hours of IPV-related content delivered through lecture, group discussions and visits to service centers for women survivors. Except one university none others have formally assessed students on the topic. All contact persons identified the importance of IPV content in nursing curricula. The barriers reported were a lack of curricular time and content, nursing teachers who are competent on IPV, attitudinal problems of teachers, low payment for visiting teachers, lack of continuing education opportunities for nurses. Legal aspects, communication and basic counseling skills were identified as essential curricular contents. Interactive sessions were the preferred teaching method. The findings were consistent with several studies from other countries. The current IPV training of Sri Lankan nurses is inadequate. This study highlights the importance of incorporating IPV content in nursing curricula and training of teachers to improve care for women survivors of IPV.

Keywords: Nurses, Intimate Partner Violence, Training, Nursing Curricula, Barriers