
A Study on Medical Social Work Intervention and Patient Satisfaction

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Abstract

Social work is a professional and academic discipline that seeks to improve the quality of life and enhance wellbeing of individuals, families, couples, groups, and communities through research, policy planning, community development, direct practice, crisis intervention, ensuring social welfare and security for those affected by social disadvantages such as poverty, psychosocial care to mentally and physically disabled, and raising voices against social injustice for social reforms, including social actions against violations of civil liberties and human rights.

Objectives of the study are to explore the nature of social work intervention and to discover the relationship between medical social worker intervention and patient satisfaction.

Methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative methods using in-depth interview and structured interview schedule. A total no, of 100 samples were collected for screening and 10 samples taken for case study.

Results and discussion shows that the social worker's psycho-social intervention in hospital would help the patient to open up and understand their problem, cope with the situation, follow up of the treatment and take proper decision, to lead future life in a better way. This study shows that effectiveness of medical social worker intervention in reducing the psycho-social problems both patient and the family members. Motivation, therapies, different health related educations, positive reinforcement and suggestions helped patients to adjust with the situation and overcome from the problem. Social worker plays a major role in every setting, especially in the entire process of rehabilitation, hospital setting and NGOs to provide psycho-social support to the people.

Key Words: *Medical Social Work Intervention, Psycho-social Problems, Patient Satisfaction.*

Introduction

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, community development, social welfare as well as social action and respect for diversities are central to social work”.

Psychiatric Social Work

Psychiatric social workers deal with the major and minor (psychosis and neurosis) mental illnesses and also provide mental health services to individuals with high needs. They perform psychotherapy, diagnose mental illness and do psycho-social intervention to address a range of social problems that often accompany illness.

Medical Social Workers

Medical social workers are also called hospital social workers. They have major role in hospital setting in providing different health care facilities, admission and discharge plan, counselling, role as a patient psycho social consultant (providing information about the different health care schemes for the needy people) and as a grief counsellor.

Medical social workers also collaborate with the other disciplines such as doctors, nursing staffs and pharmacologists etc., they provide psychosocial support to the patients and their family members to cope up with the situation and sort out the problems by taking proper decision and by choosing best solutions to the issues.

Review of Literature

Unlike other human service agencies, social work may be the predominate profession in the staff and administrative structure. Hospital social workers play a more consultative role, interacting and collaborating with many disciplines every day. Often these professionals do not fully understand or appreciate what social workers do. Social workers' role in the hospital settings are: General medical social worker, Renal social worker, Cardiac care, Organ transplant, Paediatric oncology, Oncology social work with adults, Social work in emergency room, Rural hospital social work and so on. The current hospital social workers work from a bio-psycho-social approach. (Camille Gregorian, 2005).

Social Work Practice in Hospitals-theoretical Perspective

Specific to the hospital social worker is the bio-psychosocial approach to practice. “Social worker’s bio-psychosocial approach provides a careful balanced perspective, which takes into account the entire person in his or her environment and helps social workers in screening and assessing the needs of an individual from the multidimensional point of view”. The bio-psychosocial approach considering three overlapping aspects of the patient’s functioning: “bio” refers to the biological and medical aspects of the patient’s health and well-being; “psycho” refers to the patient’s self-worth, self-esteem and emotional resources as they related to the medical condition; and “social” refers to the social environment that surrounds and influences the patient. (Joan Beder, 2006)

General Medical Social Work

The American Hospital Association (1984) defines discharge planning as an interdisciplinary process guided by the following essential elements:

1. Early identification of patients likely to need complex post hospital care
2. Identification of patient preferences for the post hospital care
3. Patient and family education
4. Patient and family assessment and counselling
5. Planning, development and coordination of community resources needed to ensure continuity of care after discharge.
6. Post discharge follow-up to ensure services and plan outcome.

In most hospitals these activities fall within the realm of the social work department, although nursing departments are also involved in this work. (Davidson, 1990).

Social Work on the Orthopaedic Unit

Patients are admitted to the orthopaedic unit for different reason with broken bones, bone injury as a result of an accident etc... they face problems like depression, loneliness, isolated, sever pain, guilt. (Joan Beder, 2006).

Social Work in the Obstetrics/Gynaecology Unit

In obstetrical unit women give birth to the new babies. Women who give birth to the child would not know how to feed babies, do not know how to care them etc. So social workers are working in antenatal, prenatal and postnatal units. In this setting they help women are how to take care of the babies, what kind of nutritional food they have to take and help them to provide their child a positive environment. (Joan Beder, 2006).

Social Work on the Neurology Unit

The patients who are suffering from neurological problems would face the problems of seizures and stroke. They may also develop the psychological problems of depression, stress, anger or anxiety and behavioural changes may occur. In these cases social workers help patients and their family members to take further precautions and cope with the situation. (Joan Beder, 2006).

Social Work on the Surgical Unit

The surgical department is divided into general surgical procedures (operations that are not related to cardiac conditions, oncology or gynaecology) and vascular procedures (surgeries due to problems with blood circulation). In a surgical unit, the relationship between social worker and patient is usually short term and tends not to pre-exist from prior hospitalization. On the vascular side of the surgical unit, many of the patients are older, even elderly, and have been battling disabling conditions for a long time. In these situations, the level of family involvement and resources has to be assessed, and if the patient and family disagree, the role of the social worker is to work toward agreement on the discharge plan. (Joan Beder, 2006).

Social Work on the Geriatric Unit

“Patients are admitted to the geriatric unit for a variety of reasons, physical and psychological problems; such as dementia, depression, alzheimer’s disease, heart problems, cancer, respectively. These reasons would make them to feel isolation, they feel dependent and weak.

Here social workers have to play a major role by focusing towards the strengthening and make them to improve their level of independence by using copying mechanisms”.

Social Work in the Cardiac Care Unit

Many people in the world without the discrimination of men, women, youth and elderly experience coronary heart disease. A heart attack causes permanent damage to the heart muscles. Heart attack happens because of the narrowing of the arteries that supplies the blood to the heart. Heart attack causes death; some are in the mouth of death, because of this patient and family members would face different kinds of physical, psychological and economic burden. In these cases social worker builds a rapport with the patients and their care taker. They also do intervention with the patient and their family like changing life style system, educating about symptoms and regular follow up of the medicines, provide emotional, economic, social support and copying mechanism. (Joan Beder, 2006) and (Horn et al, 1995)

Organ Transplant Social Work

Virtually in all transplant programs, social workers have been available to help patients and families to meet the challenges of organ transplantation. From the time of initial referral, though assessment, waiting period, transplant admission and post transplantation follow up, it is the role of social worker who is responsible for patient and family psycho-social assessment, treatment and rehabilitation (Paris et al, 1999).

Paediatric Oncology Social Work

Child with cancer who is admitted in the oncology ward suffers a lot, along with the child family members also suffer because of the problem their child faces. Parents are more worried about the future of their children and fear about the modern medicine. Whole family and patient face stressful situation when the child is diagnosed with the cancer. When the child is under the treatment like chemotherapy and radiation they lose hair, severe pain and burning in the body make child feel isolated, self stigmatized, ashamed and doubtfulness about the acceptability of the peers and family members. In these cases role of social worker is essential in assessment, crisis intervention, counselling and provide financial assistance to the family as well as patient to cope with the situation and reduce the problem by regular follow up of the medicines. (Stewart, 2003), (Shields et al, 1995) and (Stovall, 1993)

Oncology Social Work with Adults

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. Cancer occurs when a cell in the body mutates to an abnormal state and begins to multiply uncontrollably. Typically, the cancerous cells begin to grow on an organ of the body and, if not treated or if the cancer growth (tumour) is not removed, a metastasis can occur. Metastasis means cancer cells from the original site have broken away and travelled through the body in the bloodstream or the lymphatic system and the cancer cells have spread to other organs where new tumours can grow (ACS, 2004).

The HIV/AIDS Social Worker

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. It's compromised immune system is less able to fight off common germs and disease.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) results from, and is the most severe manifestation of infection with HIV. Most people infected with HIV will eventually develop AIDS. Modes of transmission are as follows:

1. Sexual intercourse with someone who has HIV
2. Using contaminated needles that is used by the HIV infected person.
3. Receiving contaminated blood through the HIV infected person.
4. From the infected mother to the child.

HIV infected person he/she may be unaware that the transmission of the virus has occurred. HIV infected person would lose resistance power. So they develop many diseases like pneumonia, serious skin disorders, tuberculosis and so on. If patient diagnosed with HIV positive, person would get depression, anxiety and other psycho-social problems. The treatment like ELIZA test and CD4 count test is available to reduce and to take further precautions. To reduce the psycho-social problem of the infected person, and to reduce the stress of the family members ICTC counselling is available. This is run by the social workers to provide psycho-social strength, educate them to take further precautions.

(Curran, 1983), (Joan Beder, 2006) and (Urbina et al, 2004)

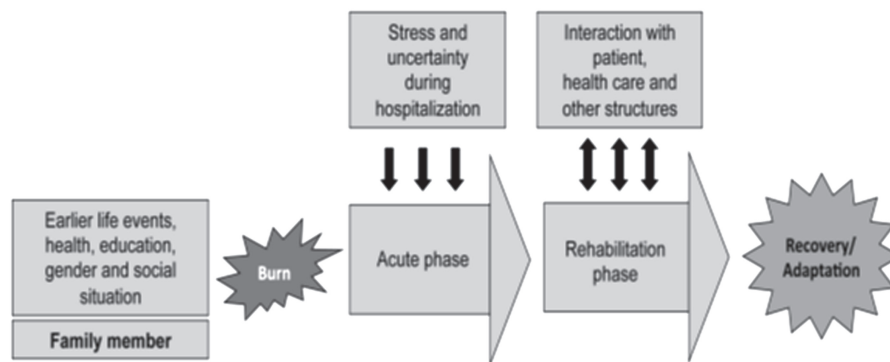
Tuberculosis Social Work

Tuberculosis (TB) is a global health concern; nearly one-third of the global population is infected with Mycobacterium tuberculosis and at risk of developing the disease. More than 90% of global TB cases and deaths occur in the developing world, where 75% of cases are in the most economically productive age group. Ethiopia ranks seventh among the world's 22 high-burden tuberculosis (TB) countries. (Park. K, 2013)

Social worker plays an important role in the DOTS centre to diagnose the problem and provide psycho-social support to the patient and their care taker to control their expressed emotions and facilitate to get a better care through the treatment.

Social Work in a Burn Unit

Burn injury can have a devastating impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of a patient and their families. Depending on the mechanism of injury, bereavement and non-accidental injury may raise further issues that impact the psychological health of the patient. The patient's mental state will impact on various aspects of their care including pain tolerance, anxiety level, and motivation. Social workers do intervene and provide support by giving motivation, facilities and emotional support and addressing the psychological aspects of a patient care that facilitates their overall treatment. Psycho-social support also needed to the family members of the patient, to address their psycho-social aspects and provide emotional support (Josefin Backstrom, 2013).



It suggests that several factors may influence the ways in which relatives are affected when a family member or close friend undergoes a trauma such as a severe burn, and that family members are also in a process of adaptation. (Ahmed M. Al-Mousawi, 2009).

Methodology

Objectives

1. To understand the socio-demographic profile of the patients.
2. To explore the nature of social work intervention.
3. To discover the relationship between medical social worker intervention and patient satisfaction.

Case Studies

Case Study: 1

Patient named Mrs Lakshmi (fake name) was 43 years old woman hailing from Shimoga district with the problem of brain tumour admitted in the oncology ward. Patient suffered a lot economically and physically. She always worried about her children and hospital bill. When social work trainee interacted with her she felt happy and shared her experiences of painful situation she was facing. While interacting with her social work trainee came to know that psycho-social problems like-stress, worry, tension and anxiety, social problems she had by thinking the future of her children. So Social work trainee informed her about the health card provided in the hospitals and suggested to consult the social work department. Trainee also provided CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), advised her to think in a positive way and cope with the situation. After follow up social worker asked the questions to the patient to know the satisfaction level by the intervention of social work trainee. For each question she had given a positive answer and appreciated the social work trainee.

Case Study: 2

Patient named Mr. Ahemad (fake name), 57 years old man studied up to 5th standard having his own fruit business came from Shimoga and he belongs to the Islam religion and Muslim community from the middle class family.

Social work trainee visited surgery ward and interacted with the patient, to know about the psycho-social problem of the patient. When trainee interacted with the patient, she came to know that patient was admitted because of the wound over the left 2nd toe for one month. Doctors diagnosed it as an amputation of left foot. Now his 2nd toe was removed because of itching and blackish decolourisation of the wound and the chances of spreading in to the other toes. According to the patient, he ate 12 Mackerel fish in one day then it started itching in his leg. One of his friends suggested to cover his foot with the Garlic paste, patient did the same then on wards the problem had started. Patient also told that he had been drinking alcohol and had the habit of smoking.

Social worker trainee intervened and suggested him, not to take allergic food and told him to maintain hygiene because maintaining hygiene is important to cure the amputation in the leg. Trainee also suggested the effects of alcohol to the health. Trainee suggested drinking water or orange juice when he has craving and told him to keep him busy one or the other work and spend his time with the family members. Trainee also made him aware about the lung and other health related problems because of his smoking habit and suggested to follow up of the treatment. Patient agreed to stop drinking alcohol and follow up the treatment. Social worker asked the questions to him to know the satisfaction level of him by the intervention of social work trainee, for each question he had given positive answers and appreciated social work trainee.

The interpretation of the case shows that although there were several problems for the patient, by the intervention of social work trainee, he came to know about his health related problems on account of alcohol and smoking. By this intervention of trainee he felt happy and realized his mistake and took proper decision to lead a happy life in future. So social work intervention would be helpful for those patients who are having the surgery related problems. Because of this intervention they can reduce the burden and over come from the problem as well as take proper decisions.

Case Study: 3

Patient Mr Radhakrishnan (fake name), was 45 years old man hailing from Dharwad, studied up to SSLC and working as a driver and belongs to the Hindu religion from the low economic background. The patient came to the

hospital with the complaint of weakness; doctors diagnosed and sent him to the DOTS (Direct observation and Treatment Short course). The counsellor recognized it as Tuberculosis and he was in 3rd stage. Counsellor advised him to take proper treatment for caution. Then he was admitted in the respiratory ward for better treatment.

During the treatment trainee found that he was not adjusted with the hospital and refused to take the treatment and scolds his wife for a small matter and gets irritated. Trainee spoke to him and built a rapport to explore the actual problem. When trainee interacted with him, he slowly opened up and revealed his problem that, he had tuberculosis and he was afraid of dying and got irritated. He used to get angry and used to scold when people tell him to take medicine. Then trainee interacted with the care taker of the patient (wife), and asked her about his behaviour before and after admission to the hospital. She replied that patient was normal before coming to the hospital and had taken care of her. When he came to know that he had tuberculosis and it was in 3rd stage he lost interest and started thinking about his death, got irritated and started scolding her. She was feeling bad that her husband was scolding her because of his own mistake and made her the culprit.

At first social work trainee intervene with the patient and make him to realize his problem properly by suggesting that, if he would take proper treatment without any delay or refusal the treatment would cure the disease. And about his fear of death and irritation, trainee provided the cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to the client to think positive. Trainee advised him that, his wife was doing good for him and staying along with him in the hospital because she loves him and she was telling him to take medicine to cure his illness. Totally trainee took 4 sessions in his case work to give positive reinforcement and help client overcome from the problem.

After the intervention with client, trainee had done the psycho-social intervention with his wife. Because she also needed the psycho-social support to overcome the problem, the trainee told her to adjust with her husband and talk to him in a proper way and to advice him to take medicine regularly. And helped her to use adaptive coping mechanism as well as think in a positive way. After the positive reinforcement she took proper decision that she would speak with her husband in a proper way and adjust with him.

The social worker also enquired about his satisfaction as a result of the intervention of social work trainee. The response was positive and he appreciated the social work trainee.

Social work trainee interpreted that, the client had the illness of tuberculosis for that he built a negative attitude towards his wife and the treatment, and he also developed death wishes. Even his wife also suffered because of the problem created by her husband. After the intervention his all negative feelings got reduced and he agreed to complete the course of medicine. His wife also agreed to adjust with her husband. Both of them spoke happily and adjusted with the situation. In this way social worker intervention helped them to overcome the problem. It shows that social worker intervention is needed in the respiratory ward to provide support by doing psycho-social intervention.

Discussion, Findings and Results

Over all, this study interprets on the medical social worker intervention and patient satisfaction. The role of medical social worker in the different wards such as oncology, surgery, urology, paediatrics, organ transplant, respiratory and so on, would help the patients to resolve their problem. Social worker's psycho-social intervention in hospital would help the patient to open up and understand their problem, cope with the situation, follow up of the treatment and take proper decision, in leading future life in a better way.

Medical social worker intervention also needed for the family members of the patients to reduce their expressed emotion. This study results shows that the effectiveness of medical social worker intervention in reducing the psycho-social problems both patient and the family members is relatively satisfactory. Motivation, therapies, different health related education, positive reinforcement and suggestions helped patients to adjust with the situation and overcome from the problem.

Suggestions

1. Social work intervention is needed every where, especially in the rural and remote areas, where people are unaware of the facilities given by the government.
2. Social work intervention is needed where the people are suffering from the ill health and they do not get proper treatment.

3. Social work intervention is needed in slum areas, to provide better health care facilities as well as disseminate the information regarding the health related diseases and its prevention.
4. Social worker has to provide better support and services to the needy people who are having low economic status.
5. Government should appoint the professional social workers in every setting, to provide better facilities to the people.
6. Role of social work in hospital setting is very important to provide services, support and care to the patients, so hospitals should appoint a social worker.
7. Social worker should provide better psycho-social intervention to the patients to cope with the situations and reduce their problem.
8. Government and other training agencies provide proper effective training to the social worker to improve their skills to best serve the society.
9. Hospitals should recognize the work of a social worker and help him to give better services to the patient.
10. Social worker in hospital setting should do the psycho-social intervention to the family members to reduce their expressed emotions and burden.
11. Social worker work as a facilitator to provide health related schemes and financial assistance through mobilizing resources.

Conclusion

This research study shows that the role and intervention of social worker really helped the patient to overcome the problem. This study indicated that the patients are getting one or the other support, service and care from the social worker. The patients are getting psycho-social intervention by the social worker in the hospital setting to reduce their burden and adjust with the difficult situations. Social worker also provides the information and help about the various health schemes of hospital as well as government schemes to the patients who are having poor (low) economic background. Thus the social worker plays a major role in every setting, especially in the entire process of rehabilitation, hospital setting and NGOs to provide psycho-social support to the people.

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