



Education of Certified Nurse Specialist in Family Health Nursing in Japan

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Introduction

The certified nurse specialists (CNS) education program was established in Japan in 1994 to advance and improve medical and nursing sciences [1]. Since the establishment of the program, the CNS has been contributing to the improvement of nursing care quality not only in hospitals but also for the community as a whole, providing professional nursing care to patients and their families by utilizing their specialties in the field of medical nursing care, which is steadily advancing and becomes more complicated. In this paper, the primary focus of the discussion is placed on the framework of the CNS education program and the curriculum of the Certified Nurse Specialist in Family Health Nursing (CNSF), who specializes in family health nursing.

Establishment of a Training Organization and Certification Program for Nurse Specialist

Approximately 3,400 CNSs are currently registered in Japan. They are trained experts in nursing care, all of whom have mastered specific knowledge and skills divided into 11 domains. In order to acquire the CNS certification, one must graduate from a nursing university or college, then accumulate nursing experiences through practice in the field, and complete an education program offered at the graduate school level to master expert learning. According to the Japan Association of Nursing Programs in Universities [2], which is the credentialing organization of the CNS education program, the CNS is defined as "a registered nurse with skills and wide perspectives to comprehensively grasp the problems of the patients and their families, as well as with the professionalism to contribute to the improvement of nursing quality in facilities and community through utilizing expertise one is specialized in nursing sciences." A registered nurse can acquire CNS certification by taking the Japanese Nursing Association qualification examination after completing the master's program and passing the examination. The CNS has six roles as follows [3]:

1. To provide excellent nursing care to individuals, families, and groups (practice).
2. To provide consultation to care providers, including nurses (consultation).
3. To coordinate relevant parties involving health, medical, and welfare services for the smooth provision of necessary care (coordination).
4. To resolve ethical issues and emotional conflicts to protect the rights of individuals, families, and groups (ethical consideration).
5. To provide educational support to nurses to improve their care quality (education).
6. To engage in research activities in clinical settings to enhance and improve expert knowledge and skills (research).

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The concept above is similar to that of the core components of the CNS program in the United States. However, the Japanese CNS's nursing is practiced within the scope of the relevant Japanese law, the Act on Public Health Nurses, Midwives and Nurses, that defines the roles of nurses. The CNS program in Japan is not a public certificate that allows nurses the same level of responsibility as the United States' Nurse Practitioners (NPs), who can perform specific levels of diagnoses and treatments. The certification system has been under review to expand the nurse's discretion in clinical settings.

Education Program of CNSF

The CNSF is a unique CNS with essential nursing knowledge and skills, who are experts specialized in know-how and techniques in supporting patient's family. In order to acquire CNSF certification, one must first complete the master's degree at a university with a curriculum specialized in family nursing and then pass the certification examination. There are six universities with the CNSF curriculum in Japan. The education program primarily consists of the following four subjects with 38 units:

1. Subjects associated with the roles and positions of family nursing in health, medical, and welfare systems
2. Subjects regarding family assessment
3. Subjects regarding family nursing support methods
4. Family nursing practice

Family nursing is different from other nursing sciences in its focus, which is placed on family, in problem-solving; it requires multi-disciplinary collaborations with other professionals, including doctors, psychologists, social workers, and dieticians, to care for the family. Therefore, CNSFs must utilize a wide range of knowledge,

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not only in medicine and nursing but also in psychology, sociology, and biology. The first author's university introduces various theories and concepts in the CNSF education program as follows, in addition to the system, development, and risk-management theories:

- Public familialism
- Self-care nursing theory
- Network theory
- Interpersonal assistance theory
- Communication theory
- Role theory
- Family therapy theory
- Organization theory

Goal of CNSF Education

Family nursing aims to support the health of all family members, including the patients. To this end, the CNSFs need to provide specific nursing care based on expert knowledge of family nursing. Their primary role is to support not only the patients but also their families as a whole, as well as each family member, providing a wide range of assistance for the issues in their health and livelihood. The goal of the CNSF education program, therefore, is that the learners will master the following knowledge and skills that enable them to establish sound interpersonal relationships with subject families by completing the program [4]:

1. To protect the rights and dignity of the family
2. To become a reliable person for the family
3. To trust family empowerment
4. To move away from the paternalism of medical practitioners and family
5. To proceed with negotiations with patience and establish an agreement with the family
6. To self-evaluate as nursing practitioners

For the aim of fostering such nurses, it is required for the learners to meet many families and spend quality time tackling various problems together with the families. In this sense, introducing repetitive case conferences using actual cases in the curriculum would enhance education effects. Learning through discussions with experts, including professionals working in clinical settings, regarding techniques different from ordinary nursing practices, such as family assessment or family intervention, should be beneficial in improving the quality of nursing practices and enhancing family nursing as a whole.

As of December 2024, the CNSF curriculum is registered in five education facilities, and the number of registered CNSFs in Japan reached approximately 100. Two-thirds of them work in clinical settings in general hospitals, performing a wide range of family nursing practices, including emergency, chronic, and terminal care settings. Practicing family nursing is considered to improve the nursing quality as a whole. The family nursing strategies planned by CNSFs would assist nurses having difficulties in attending to the

patient's family; in fact, the CNSFs are often asked to take charge as responsible figures. The significance of CNSF is steadily growing in organizations as a valuable asset.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the article.

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