Importance of the social worker's role in educating patients on their rights

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Abstract
From global human interests that were a specialty profession, social work was founded together with the very middle of humane society that embodied such characteristics as compassion, solidarity, and cooperation among individuals. Thus, over time, social work has transformed into a scientific profession based on science and methodology for the benefit of improving human dignity and well-being. (Abed, 2010, p. 13). Social work practice in health care settings is rooted largely in medical social work. While working on patients' access to organizational resources and functions, strengthening of their social functioning, and collaboration between healthcare institutions and social service agencies would be beneficial for the client; the client gains the most from efficient medical help that results in recovery which affects most major societal groups.

Keywords: community, collaboration, scientific, social.

Introduction

Social work is recognized as a specialized professional discipline that developed in response to global human concerns. It is a human endeavor that has existed since the emergence of society, manifesting as empathy, solidarity, and cooperation among individuals within the community. Social work has evolved significantly, transforming into a profession grounded in scientific principles and methodologies designed to enhance human dignity and welfare. Abid (2010, p. 13).

Medical social work represents a significant domain within social work, conducted in medical institutions, where social workers assist patients in accessing the resources and services available within these settings. This improves the patient's social performance and underscores the importance of collaboration between medical institutions and social services in delivering optimal medical care. Such cooperation facilitates recovery and enhances social functioning, benefiting both the individual and the community.

Social work in medical settings represents a specialized area of practice conducted by trained professionals who collaborate with medical teams to enhance the capacity of hospitals and treatment centers in delivering high-quality medical services. Al-Shirani (2009, pp. 282-283).

When a patient registers or is admitted to a healthcare facility, they are entitled to a copy of the "Patient

Rights Document" issued by the Ministry of Health in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This document also informs patients about the healthcare facility's mission. The document outlines the patient's rights to timely access to appropriate healthcare services, irrespective of race, gender, religion, belief, or origin.

The third clause of the document underscores the necessity of preserving the confidentiality of the patient's personal information, diagnosis, tests, treatment, and medical records.

The document emphasizes the necessity of delivering healthcare within a secure and suitable environment that honors the patient's dignity and health condition.

The document enumerates the patient's right to refuse prescribed treatment or any component thereof, contingent upon compliance with relevant laws and regulations, and to receive information regarding the anticipated consequences of such refusal.

The implementation of these rights in practice relies significantly on the role of the social worker

within the healthcare facility. The social worker is required to inform the patient of their rights, address any concerns, and ensure the patient possesses comprehensive knowledge regarding their health status, especially in cases of chronic or severe illness diagnosis. The social worker must monitor the patient's emotional and psychological well-being, addressing issues such as anxiety, depression, or fear associated with the illness.

The social worker coordinates with social institutions and engages with the patient's family to facilitate understanding of the patient's rights and support the treatment process. The document delineates the social worker's responsibilities in informing patients of their rights and overseeing the effective application of these rights.

An essential aspect of the social worker's role in healthcare institutions is the assessment of their performance via surveys or patient feedback. This feedback assesses the quality of care and the social worker's performance in fulfilling their responsibilities, ensuring alignment with the hospital's policies and objectives. The document indicates that social work services in certain Saudi hospitals are primarily perceived as administrative or clerical functions, rather than as essential components of patient care, thereby undermining the full potential of social work in these environments.

The services provided by the social worker in the healthcare facility are primarily directed towards the beneficiary, specifically the patient. A specialized questionnaire has been developed to evaluate the benefits patients derive from the presence of a social worker in healthcare settings and to collect their opinions, including their awareness of the availability of these services in the hospital.

Problem Statement

The development of social services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is associated with the societal, economic, and cultural changes that have influenced Saudi society. These changes required achieving a balance between material and moral transformations, which could only be accomplished through the establishment of social services. Consequently, social services became a crucial component of the state's public welfare system, particularly within the Ministry of Health, where their integration in hospitals has significantly enhanced patients' sense of well-being. This role is critical in addressing the social and environmental determinants that contribute to illness, ultimately affecting the patient's capacity to fulfill their social roles.

Social services originated in the Ministry of Health hospitals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the establishment of a medical social services department in 1393, under the General Administration of Health Services. This department was tasked with planning social work activities within the ministry and its healthcare institutions, as well as supervising the activities of social workers. The Ministry initiated contracts with several social workers across diverse fields, initially concentrating on psychiatric and chest hospitals. Subsequently, it broadened its recruitment of qualified national personnel as the state assumed a more significant role in supporting social services.

Despite considerable efforts by relevant ministries to enhance social services, the role of social workers in numerous medical institutions remains ambiguous. This ambiguity stems from inadequate management of social work within institutions or from insufficient acknowledgment of the significance of the social worker's expertise. The role of social workers is frequently confined to tasks that do not reflect their professional expertise, adversely affecting the performance and effectiveness of social work services in these institutions.

This study examines the role of social workers in educating patients about their rights and identifies the barriers that impede the effective execution of this role. This will be accomplished by conducting surveys of social workers and collecting patient opinions on the knowledge and impact of the social worker's role in raising awareness of patient rights, as specified in the regulations, and assessing any deficiencies in such knowledge.

Ieipoi4ance of the Study

"The study of personal rights recognized nationally and internationally, which, within a particular

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civilization, affirm the dignity of the individiul and protect it in life, while maintaining the social order of society" is what Yaves Madiot (1976) defines as human rights (Madiot, 1976, p. 18).

This study is significant due to its emphasis on fundamental human rights, particularly the right of patients to receive treatment and comprehensive healthcare that acknowledges their humanity and fulfills their needs as stipulated by the regulations of the healthcare institution delivering the service. The research emphasizes the social worker's function in enhancing awareness of patient rights and providing education to patients regarding these rights. This study will examine patient perspectives regarding this role and will include surveys of social workers to evaluate the role's actual performance.

The study's significance is rooted in its aim to identify effective methods for enhancing the dissemination of human rights culture in a society that prioritizes personal dignity and the development of civilized communities. This study aims to enhance the development of a just and human-centered society by advocating for individual rights, particularly within healthcare contexts.

Objectives of the Study

This study looks for to examine the role of social workers in educating patients about their rights, guided by the following specific objectives:

- To analyze patients' perceptions of the rights afforded to them within the hospital setting.
- To investigate patients' perceptions regarding the role of social workers and the services offered within the hospital setting.
- To identify the barriers affecting the performance of social workers in the hospital as perceived by the social workers themselves.
- To analyze the perspectives of medical and administrative personnel on the significance of the social worker's role within the healthcare facility.
- To recommend enhancements for the quality of services delivered to patients by social workers in hospitals, with a specific focus on patient rights, duties, and responsibilities toward the hospital.

Research Questions

- This study focuses on a primary research question that it aims to address through investigation.
  What is the actual role of social workers in informing patients about their rights? The primary question is subdivided into several sub-questions:
- What is the level of patient awareness regarding the rights specified in the Patient Rights Charter published by the Ministry of Health in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- What are patients' perspectives regarding the function of the social worker in the hospital setting?
- What obstacles do social workers identify as hindering their ability to fulfill their roles in healthcare institutions?
- What is the perspective of the medical and administrative staff in the hospital concerning the significance of the social worker's role within the healthcare facility?
- What recommendations have been proposed to enhance the quality of services delivered to patients by social workers in hospitals, specifically in relation to patient rights, duties, and responsibilities toward the hospital?

Methodology of the Study

This study employed a descriptive analytical approach, which yields detailed data on the subject and facilitates a realistic interpretation of the relevant information. This methodology facilitates the prediction of future trends or outcomes derived from the collected data.

To achieve the study's objectives, the researcher utilized a descriptive analytical approach to evaluate the extent of social workers' performance in fulfilling their roles related to patient rights

in healthcare institutions. The analysis incorporated the viewpoints of patients, medical and administrative personnel, and social workers, while also highlighting the challenges encountered by social workers in fulfilling their responsibilities. A questionnaire for social workers was utilized as a data collection tool in this study.

Terminology and Concepts of the Study

This study identifies several key terms that require definition, including:

The concept of role refers to the expected behavior and responsibilities associated with a particular position within a social structure or system. It encompasses the norms and functions that guide individual actions and interactions in various contexts.

The term "role" denotes a collection of expectations concerning an individual's behavior within a specific social context, along with the corresponding expectations from others in that context. Hegazy (1982, p. 79).

The concept encompasses the practice of social rights and duties associated with a social position, along with the standards or social status, which are represented by symbols and markers of that status. (Omar, 1992, p. 71)

Operational Definition of Role

The term "role" denotes the responsibilities undertaken by the social worker in a medical facility or hospital, particularly in delivering social assistance to patients. This work is essential for the success of the treatment.

The role of a Medical Social Worker encompasses providing support and resources to patients and their families within healthcare settings. They address psychosocial needs, facilitate communication between patients and healthcare providers, and assist in navigating the complexities of medical care.

The medical social worker oversees all social service operations within a healthcare institution, encompassing both the medical and external environments. This role entails facilitating social change processes, collaborating with medical teams or rehabilitation specialists in the rehabilitation of patients and individuals with disabilities, and ensuring their social adaptation and integration. It also entails efforts to enhance health conditions in the surrounding environment (Al-Namas, 2000, 43).

Social worker in the medical field

A medical social worker is a specialist in social services who must possess specific traits, adhere to professional standards, and demonstrate the competency necessary to work effectively across diverse sectors and fields of social services (Abid & Jodet, 2010, 53).

From the preceding information, the medical social worker can be operationally defined as follows: The medical social worker is a specialist in social services, equipped with professional competence and standards, who operates within healthcare institutions.

Concept of Awareness and Education

Awareness is defined in the Contemporary Arabic Dictionary as the comprehension and acceptance of a concept, its retention, and subsequent reflection. Awareness of a subject entails comprehending it in its authentic essence. To "make someone aware" refers to the process of advising and guiding an individual toward a comprehensive understanding of a specific topic. Media plays a crucial role in enhancing public awareness, and health awareness is vital (Omar, 2008, p. 2469). Awareness is characterized in the Al-Mujain Al-Waseet as retention, appreciation, understanding, and clear perception (1044). Ibn Manzur, in Lisan al-Arab, defines awareness as the cognitive process of retaining information mentally. Awareness entails understanding, retention, and acceptance of information. Consequently, they are regarded as "aware" (IbnManzur, 2003, p. 396).

Awareness can be operationally defined as the process of enabling individuals and communities to recognize a specific issue, comprehend its various dimensions, both positive and negative, and motivating them to pursue actions that serve their personal and collective interests.

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Concept of Illness and Operational

Definition of a Patient Illness refers to a condition of suffering caused by disease. Illness, from a scientific standpoint, is defined as an unnatural biological pain or mental disorder that manifests specific symptoms in an individual and necessitates particular forms of care (Omar, 2004, p. 57). An operational definition of a patient is a person experiencing abnormal biological pain or a mental disorder that manifests specific symptoms and necessitates targeted medical, psychological, and social care.

Rights of Patients

In Arabic, the term "right" is defined as something firmly established and indisputable (Al-Manawi, 990 AD, p. 143).

General Definition of Rights

A right is a legally established and recognized entitlement that confers authority or responsibility to pursue a particular interest (Al-Taymat, 2001, p. 26).

Definition of the Patient's Right in Operational Terms

The patient's requirements for healthcare services that are legally mandated and supplied by the healthcare institution.

Previous Studies

Al-Ajilani's Study (2005), titled "Evaluation of Professional Skills Among Social Workers: A Survey Study in Mental Health Hospitals in Saudi Arabia," aimed to assess the nature and content of professional skills among social workers in the mental health sector through the application of a professional skills scale. The study also analyzed the correlation between years of experience in the mental health field and the skill level of social workers, as well as the relationship between age and professional skills among social workers employed in mental health hospitals. The study employed a social survey methodology, involving social workers from mental health hospitals in Riyadh, Dammam, and Taif, with a total of 60 participants. The study yielded several findings, detailed as follows:

- The data revealed that the majority of study participants exhibited strong interpersonal skills in patient interactions. Social workers demonstrated proficient human relations skills in their interactions with patients.
- The study indicated that increased experience correlated with heightened confidence in cognitive skills, human relations skills, role understanding, and intellectual skills. It was observed that an increase in experience correlated with a decrease in confidence regarding influence skills.
- The data indicated that the majority of study participants demonstrated role understanding skills in patient interactions.
- The data indicated that study participants generally possessed strong intellectual skills in patient interactions.
- The study indicated that the majority of participants demonstrated cognitive skills in patient interactions.
- The study concluded that females exhibited greater awareness than males in cognitive skills, human relations skills, role understanding skills, and intellectual skills, whereas males demonstrated higher awareness in influence skills.

Awad and Nieier (2010) conducted a study titled "The Reality of Applying the Social Work Profession in the Medical Field and Its Obstacles from the Perspective of Workers in Medical Institutions in Qalqitya and Tulknrm Districts."

This study was conducted in Palestine to examine the application of the social work profession within the medical field and the challenges encountered, as perceived by professionals in medical

institutions in the Qalqilya and Tulkarin districts. This study aimed to assess the impact of variables including gender, educational qualification, years of experience, profession, and institutional affiliation on the extent of these obstacles.A random sample of 200 workers was selected from medical institutions in Qalqilya and Tulkarm.

To meet the study's objectives, a questionnaire was developed to evaluate the challenges associated with implementing social work in the medical field. The questionnaire comprised two sections:The initial section comprised demographic information regarding the respondents.The second part comprised items that assess these obstacles, consisting of 32 items categorized into four primary areas: obstacles associated with the medical institution and the medical team, obstacles pertaining to the social worker's qualifications and training, and obstacles related to patients and their families. Additionally, challenges associated with the local environment.The findings of the study encompassed the subsequent results:

- The average total score for obstacles encountered in the application of the social work profession within the medical field, as perceived by workers in medical institutions in Qalqilya and Tulkarm, was 63.4%, indicating a moderate level of obstacles.

- The most significant obstacles were identified in the domain of local environmental factors, followed by those associated with patients and their families. Obstacles related to the medical institution and the medical team ranked next, while the least significant obstacles pertained to the qualifications and training of social workers.

- There were no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level regarding obstacles associated with the medical institution and the medical team, nor in the obstacles related to the social worker's qualifications and training based on gender. The results favored females.

- Statistically significant differences were observed at the 0.05 level regarding obstacles related to patients and their families, with workers holding a diploma exhibiting more favorable outcomes compared to those with a Master's degree or higher. Significant differences were observed between individuals with a Bachelor's degree and those with a Master's degree, with results favoring the Bachelor's degree holders.

- Statistically significant differences were observed at the 0.05 level regarding obstacles faced by social workers, with individuals possessing 6-10 years of experience reporting greater challenges compared to those with 1-5 years of experience.

- Statistically significant differences were identified at the 0.05 significance level regarding the overall degree of obstacles to the application of social work in the medical field, with medical and administrative staff showing favorable outcomes across all areas. The disparities favored administrative personnel in interactions with both doctors and administrators, as well as between doctors and nurses, with a preference shown towards nurses and administrative staff.

- Statistically significant differences were identified at the 0.05 significance level regarding the application of social work in the medical field. These differences pertained to obstacles associated with medical institutions and the protected environment, as well as challenges related to patients and their families. Notably, the differences were influenced by the institution's affiliation, with governmental institutions showing more favorable outcomes.

- No statistically significant differences were observed at the 0.05 significance level regarding the obstacles to the application of social work in Palestine, as perceived by workers in medical institutions, based on the district variable.

Al-Nofimi et al. (2011), titled "The Reality of Social Work Practice in the Medical Field," presents an applied field study conducted on a sample of hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health in SamtanaAmav. This study investigates the role of medical social workers in the hospitals of SamtanaAmav, focusing on the social needs of patients necessitating social worker intervention and the challenges encountered by social workers in fulfilling their responsibilities.The study aimed to assess the awareness of hospital management and medical staff concerning the significance of the social work role within the hospital setting. The study

Ahmed Khalafallah Abdulrahman Alhasani[1], Fawaz Saud Dakhilallah Alkhuzaee[2], Fahad Ibrahim Jawni[3], Moataz Saraaj Kardawi[4], Mohammad Hamed Abdulaziz Alharbi[5], Zayed Saad Alzhranae[6], Saleh Mohammed Abed Alhasani[7], Yaser Wasil D Almehadi[8], Sleem Homoud Mohammad Alshareef[9].

employed a social survey methodology utilizing a comprehensive sampling technique, focusing on four distinct categories of participants, as outlined below: Patients (n=54, male and female) and social workers (n=75, male and female). There are 14 specialists, 165 nurses (both male and female), 18 doctors (both male and female), and administrative staff (both male and female). The study identified several results, notably the challenges patients encounter in accessing the services offered in the hospital.

- The study emphasized the necessity of moral and emotional support for patients to come to terms with their health conditions, alongside the requirement for material assistance from the hospital. The study identified deficiencies in care from family members and caregivers, especially concerning elderly patients. Additionally, it highlighted insufficient medical awareness regarding appropriate hospital procedures and a general lack of trust in medical treatment.

- Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of the social worker in supplying the medical team with pertinent social information regarding the patient and in facilitating communication with the patient's family. The study highlighted the necessity of motivating patients to adhere to their treatment plans and collaborate with the medical team, which includes aiding in the identification of the assistance needed by the patient. The role of the social worker in engaging in educational seminars and workshops to enhance cultural and health awareness among patients and their families was emphasized.

Al-Mohaeimadi (2013), in the study "Evaluation of the Reality of Social Work Services in the Medical Field from the Perspective of Patients," conducted a field investigation within the hospitals of Health Affairs in Medina. This study sought to analyze patients' perceptions of the services offered in the hospitals of Health Affairs in Medina, as well as to explore their perspectives on the role of the social worker within the hospital setting. The study aimed to evaluate patients' perceptions of the services offered by social workers and to investigate potential variations in patients' responses concerning the assessment of social work services within medical settings at the hospitals of Health Affairs in Medina, considering fundamental patient variables.The study's community and sample comprised all hospitalized patients within the Health Affairs hospitals in Medina, totaling 500 patients. A simple random sample of 230 patients was selected by the researcher. The research employed a descriptive and analytical methodology.The research identified several significant findings, detailed as follows:

- The hospital offers comprehensive care tailored to my health condition, and I have found the medical staff to be supportive since my admission. The hospital upholds patient information confidentiality, and I possess the right to deny visits from individuals not involved in my healthcare services. I possess the right to obtain a report detailing my health status and the outcomes of medical tests, ensuring accuracy and objectivity.

- The social worker acknowledges the patient's requirement for companionship, even following consultation with the treating physician. The social worker addresses specific instances of refusal to undergo treatment with the attending physicians. The social worker consistently documents my information in authorized forms. The social worker facilitates communication between the patient and the medical team. The social worker gathers patients' feedback to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the hospital services.

- The social worker articulates their dedication to upholding the confidentiality and privacy of my information.

- The social worker offers psychological and social support. The social worker seeks my advice regarding the necessity of a companion when required. The social worker evaluates the perspectives of patients and their companions concerning the medical services rendered to them. The social worker consistently aims to guarantee that I obtain the required services.

Sand (2013), titled "Evaluating the Role of the Social Worker in Infectious Disease Departments

of Public Hospitals from the Patients' Perspective," aimed to assess the role of social workers in the infectious disease departments of public hospitals. This analysis involved an examination of the social worker's role as defined in the policies and procedures manual for social work services, alongside a comparison with the role as perceived by patients, considering various personal variables associated with the patients. The study aimed to identify the challenges encountered by social workers when interacting with patients from the social worker's viewpoint. The research involved a sample of 60 patients and 15 social workers, employing a descriptive methodology and utilizing a questionnaire for data collection.The research yielded multiple conclusions:

- The social worker performed personal interviews, facilitated communication, underscored the confidentiality of information, and provided assistance to patients with their issues.
- Challenges were identified in the follow-up of programs for infectious disease patients and patients' discomfort with administrative and routine procedures during hospital admission.
- he studies proposed an approach to address the challenges encountered by the social worker in infectious disease departments.

Commentary on Previous Studies

Previous studies correspond with the current research in their aim to draw conclusions about the practical and theoretical performance of medical social workers, as well as to investigate the role of social workers in hospitals through surveys of patients' and social workers' perspectives in the medical domain. All prior research utilized questionnaires as a method for data collection, consistent with the approach taken in the current study. Furthermore, three of these studies were carried out in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Two utilized the descriptive methodology applied in the current study, whereas one employed the social survey approach.

The current study differentiates itself from a previous study by focusing on the theoretical aspects of the social worker's role, which employed the social survey method. The present study examines the roles of social workers in hospitals, the patient rights they advocate, and the strategies employed to foster a culture of patient rights and responsibilities within medical institutions.

This study differs from the research conducted by Awad and Niiner regarding geographical boundaries. The laner study took place in Egypt, whereas the present study was carried out in Saudi Arabia. It emphasizes the comprehensive roles of social workers and their initiatives to inform patients about their rights, especially in advocating for these rights and addressing the challenges that impede the social worker's effectiveness in this domain.

The research conducted by Noufaini differs from the present study in that it took place in a distinct region, whereas the current investigation was carried out in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the current study employed a descriptive and analytical approach, in contrast to the social survey method utilized in the prior research. The present study highlights the social worker's role in advocating for patient rights and facilitating access to appropriate medical services for patients.

The research conducted by Al-Mohammadi parallels the present study, concentrating on the perspectives of patients, social workers, and medical staff, while also investigating the functions of social workers within the hospital's social service department and the challenges they encounter. In contrast, Al-Mohammadi's study exclusively assessed the effectiveness of social work services through patient surveys.

The study by Sand, the most recent cited, differs from the current research by specifically examining the role of social workers in infectious disease departments, with an emphasis on the challenges encountered by social workers in this specialized area.

The Study Recommendations

- Establish a dedicated department or administration for social work services to allow social workers to perform their roles effectively. New systems and regulations must be established to organize and regulate social work services within the medical field, ensuring that social workers can collaborate effectively with medical and administrative teams in patient-related decision-making.

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- The Ministry of Health should enhance initiatives aimed at increasing public awareness regarding the role of social workers within healthcare institutions. This should encompass the organization of workshops, seminars, and programs that emphasize the role of social workers in hospitals, in conjunction with medical and administrative teams.
- Hospital management must assess the performance of social workers and identify any challenges they encounter in fulfilling their responsibilities. Regular follow-up on adherence to guidelines and regulations pertaining to practice, including the Patient Rights Charter, is essential.
- Enhance the competencies of social workers through the implementation of training programs specifically designed for the medical sector.
- Patient rights must be prominently displayed in accessible locations within the hospital to enhance awareness and ensure that patients are adequately informed.
- Perform follow-up studies to collect patient feedback regarding the healthcare services received in the hospital, with the objective of enhancing service delivery.
  Conduct further research and in-depth studies on the role of social workers and the challenges encountered in their responsibilities within healthcare institutions.

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