

Attitude and Intention Regarding Pain Management among Chinese Nursing Students: A Cross-Sectional Questionnaire Survey

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■ ABSTRACT:

Optimal pain management is a priority in effective nursing care. Lack of sufficient pain knowledge associated with inadequate pain management has been proved. However, the intention, defined as the predictor of behavior, regarding pain management remains unknown. Therefore, the study was to determine the attitude and intention regarding pain management among Chinese nursing students and investigate the underlying determinants and their interactions in terms of intention toward pain management. The Pain Management Survey Questionnaire, comprising the key determinants of the theory of planned behavior—that is, direct attitude, belief-based intention, subjective norm, direct control, and indirect control—was used to collect data from 512 nursing students who undertook clinical rotation in an affiliated hospital of a medical college in China. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent sample *t* test, Pearson correlation analysis, or structural equation modeling analysis. Chinese nursing students reported negative attitudes and behavioral intentions toward pain management. Direct control, subjective norm, belief-based attitude, and indirect control independently predicted nursing students' intention to treat patients with pain. Direct control was the strongest predictor. Structural equation modeling analysis further revealed 39.84% of the variance associated with intention that could be explained by determinants of the theory of planned behavior. Additionally, educational school level and previous pain management training had great effects on pain management intention. Overall, this study identified intention as an important factor in effective pain treatment. Chinese nursing students have negative attitudes and insufficient intention to pain management. Therefore, hospitals and universities in China should manage these factors to improve nursing students' practice regarding pain management.

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Pain, described as an unpleasant emotional sensation, is the most common symptom experienced by a large number of people. Pain could exert negative effects both on patients' physical activity and psychological status. Therefore, relieving pain is a fundamental requirement of patients (Chou et al., 2016; Ferrell, 2005). As part of the health system, nurses play an indispensable role in effective pain management, including providing accurate evaluation, appropriate intervention, and sufficient pain education to patients (Brown, 2013).

Carrying out these roles requires that nursing students have gained adequate knowledge of pain management in nursing schools and have been trained for pain management during the early stage of their career. Several studies conducted in Western countries have highlighted the importance of pain knowledge in effective nursing care (Al Khalailah & Al Qadire, 2013; Goodrich, 2006; Lui, So, & Fong, 2008; Plaisance & Logan, 2006; Rahimi-Madiseh, Tavakol, & Dennick, 2010; Samuels & Leveille, 2010; Shaw & Lee, 2010), providing the evidence that nursing students' knowledge is essential for their roles in clinical practice and their future roles as nurses.

Studies concerning knowledge about pain management of nurses in China are few. The knowledge and attitude survey regarding pain (KASRP) scale was used by Wei, Run, Shuang, Hong, and Xiuqiong (2014) to investigate the cognitive situation of pain in 440 clinical nurses of hospitals in the Fujian province of China. The average correct response rate was 48.35%, far less than the data reported by similar studies performed in Western countries (63.6% in the United States, 73.8% in the United Kingdom, and 62.7% in Italy, respectively) (Keefe & Wharrad, 2012), revealing that Chinese nurses had severe pain knowledge deficits.

Therefore, nursing educators in China have adopted targeted measures to solve problems of inadequate knowledge in nursing pain management, including the implementation of pain education programs for nurses. However, the effective pain management is still a big challenge for nursing care, prompting us to identify other factors that might influence the efficacy of pain treatment.

According to the theory of planned behavior (TPB) developed by Edwards et al. (2001), intention can predict an individual's behavior, how hard the person is willing to try, and how much effort they are planning to expend to perform the behavior. We should realize that only knowledge that is transformed into prompt behavior could provide optimal pain management, and intention is the major determinant in the transformational process from knowledge to

behavior. Therefore, intention has been considered a pivotal factor to affect pain management (Ajzen, 2011).

Several studies using the TPB indicate that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, the key determinants of TPB, could influence one's intention significantly (Aldrich, 2015; Dumitrescu, Wagle, Dogaru, & Manolescu, 2011; Guo, Wang, Liao, & Huang, 2016). Attitude is determined by the person's positive or negative belief from an evaluation outcome of behavior. Subjective norms indicate the person's perceptions after understanding other people's expectations and motivation according to others' practice. Perceived behavioral control is regarded as confidence and belief in behavior performance (Dumitrescu et al., 2011). Generally, the greater positive attitude, subjective norms, and favorable behavioral control, the stronger the behavior intention. Therefore, using TPB is an optimal approach for understanding the important role of intention in effective pain management.

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To our knowledge, few studies have been conducted to identify the intention and attitude of nursing students regarding pain management in China. This study aimed to determine the attitude and intention regarding pain management among Chinese nursing students and to investigate the underlying determinants and their interaction in terms of intention toward pain management. The following four questions were asked:

1. What are the attitudes and intentions regarding pain management among nursing students in China?
2. What are the determinants and their interactions in terms of intention toward pain management among Chinese nursing students?
3. What proportion of the variance in behavioral intention could be explained by determinants of TPB?
4. Do characteristics of Chinese nursing students affect their intention toward pain management?

METHODS

Design, Sample, and Setting

A descriptive, analytical and cross-sectional survey design was used by distribution of a self-administered questionnaire. The study was conducted at an affiliated hospital of a medical college in Zhejiang province in China over a period of 1 month in September 2015.

The sample inclusion criteria were nursing students who were bachelor-degree candidates, had

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