**FUTURE TRENDS IN PSYCHIATRIC NURSING**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The future of psychiatric/mental health nursing will reflect expansion of services to the elderly and chronic mentally ill. Providers of services and their reimbursement will also expand. If the specialty is to survive, changes in the undergraduate nursing curriculum must be addressed so that a larger cohort of nurses select graduate education in psychiatric/mental health nursing.

New and emerging roles for psychiatric-mental health nurses, certification programs for graduate and experienced baccalaureate nurses, and the emergence of clinical nursing research are only some of the many changes occurring in the field of psychiatric-mental health nursing that have resulted in a burgeoning literature. Through a review of the most recent of this literature, the author highlights the current trends and issues in psychiatric-mental health nursing practice, education, and research, as well as the historical antecedents of many of the issues and problems facing mental health nurses today.

It wasn’t so long ago that mental health was deeply misunderstood. As recently as the 1950s, treatments that are now considered inhumane (such as [lobotomies](https://www.britannica.com/science/lobotomy)) or controversial (such as [electroconvulsive therapy](https://www.britannica.com/science/shock-therapy-psychiatry)) were common treatments for mental illnesses like depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, epilepsy, and more.

To compound the problem of these aggressive procedures, a lack of clinical understanding of psychology and psychiatry previously resulted in misinformed diagnoses. Social and cultural biases were also inseparable from mental health diagnoses. For example, in the past, “[hysteria](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3480686/)” was a disease that presumably afflicted women. It was first recorded in ancient times: 1900 BC in Egypt and just a little later in Greece. The word comes from “hysteria,” meaning “uterus” in Greek, and those who had hysteria were prone to excessive emotion and sexual dissatisfaction. It was sexism masquerading as a legitimate illness and was actually “treated” until the second half of the 20th century.

Another long-overdue overhaul of a historically biased classification was in 1973, when the [American Psychiatric Association](https://www.apa.org/about/policy/discrimination) finally **declassified** homosexuality as a mental disorder.

Mental illness in the family was a source of shame and disgrace for much of modern history. Therefore, [institutionalization](https://study.com/learn/lesson/mental-institutions-1950s-overview-treatment-types.html) and removing the ill person from society was the primary way of handling their condition. Forced sterilization, which had nothing to do with illness treatment, was a routine procedure applied to those who lived at a mental institution. Needless to say, fixing the confusion around what is “mental illness” and how to apply mental health care through equitable and therapeutic practices is a major source of fuel for the work of contemporary mental health care practitioners today. There is still so much headway to be made in the future of mental health care.

Let’s flash forward, away from this grave history lesson. Recognizing and managing mental health concerns across the lifespan is now mainstream, front-page news. Innovations in drugs and therapies have allowed people with previously unsolvable mental health challenges to participate in society. Research has empowered doctors to more reliably diagnose mental illness, and knowledge has empowered patients to actively consent and participate in choosing treatment options.

With so much action and discourse around mental health today, psychologists, psychiatrists, and [Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (PMHNPs)](https://www.goodwin.edu/majors/pmhnp/) are poised to be involved in new sectors previously overlooked and to see job prospects skyrocket. Here are the top trends impacting mental health today, and why PMHNPs are vital in this environment.

**FUTURISTIC APPROACH IN PSYCHIATRIC NURSING**

Whilst the COVID pandemic has presented many challenges over the last few years, it has played an important role in highlighting the gaps within the mental healthcare sector. Accessibility to the right supports at the right time became evident particularly during lockdowns, along with the increased pressure felt by healthcare workers as the demand for emergency mental health services increased. These reasons, plus many more, prompted the utilization of online/digital mental health services right across the sector. These technological advancements and additions to healthcare delivery have been a step forward in better understanding the vulnerability of our mental health. As we continue to break down barriers, ask questions and listen to public conversations and concerns, it’s an exciting time to imagine where the mental health sector is heading.

**THE EVOLUTION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Over the last few years, receiving therapy and obtaining other mental health supports has transitioned from traditional face-to-face contact, to now mostly a virtual experience. Video consultations have increased the accessibility for patients to receive care regardless of their location and situation. This evolving modern approach to medicine is not only saving patients' travel time but is also removing the barriers to obtaining medication requested during these appointments. Electronic script medications can be sent directly to the patient's phone, giving patient’s immediate access to go and get their medication. Patients are also able to stay in close communication with their doctor via online chat and in some cases even have the opportunity to view their notes and treatment plan via confidential patient portals.

Projects like this, plus many others available via General Practitioners (GPs) and private organizations, are allowing vulnerable children and adults to receive the mental health care they need when they need it. Seeking mental health support unfortunately still carries a particular stigma, but technology is breaking down these barriers by eliminating the physical need to visit an unfamiliar place. Users of these services are able to speak openly and honestly in a confidential way, whilst in the comfort of a space that is non-threatening. This is a really important step in making these services appear welcoming instead of intimidating.

**FUTURE TRENDS IN PSYCHIATRIC NURSING**

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly one-fifth of adults in the U.S. live with a mental illness. If you’re passionate about helping others, there are a number of rewarding opportunities that could allow you to make a difference in people’s lives and help establish the mental health trends of the future.

Mental health is gaining visibility and services are becoming more accessible, creating a growing need for psychiatrists — medical doctors who specialize in treating mental illness and a range of disorders that affect people of all ages. Also in high demand are the services of non-physician providers who offer counseling and support services in areas such as behavioral disorders, substance abuse, and other types of mental health issues.

Rather than attending medical school, mental health counselors may start by earning an undergraduate degree such as an [online bachelor’s in psychology](https://online.maryville.edu/online-bachelors-degrees/psychology/careers), followed by a graduate degree and required licenses and certifications. Through this education and training, counselors can learn the necessary skills to help clients manage stress, confront personal challenges, and develop healthier life habits.

If you have an interest in the future of psychiatry, psychology, and other areas related to the human mind, read on for a discussion of important mental health trends that could transform diagnosis and treatment strategies in the years ahead.

1. **Changes in Illness Orientation**

Shift from illness to prevention (modification of style), specific to holistic, quantity of care to quality of care

1. **Changes in Care Delivery**

Care delivery is shifted from institutional services to community services, genetic services to counseling services, nurse patient relationship to nurse-patient partnership.

1. **Information Technology**

Mobile devices like cell phones, smartphones, and tablets are giving the public, health care providers, and researcher’s new ways to access help, monitor progress, and increase understanding of mental well-being. Mobile mental health support can be very simple but effective

1. **Telenursing or telehealth nursing**

Uses technology to provide nursing services through computers and mobile devices. As mobile devices become more common and accessible, telehealth is becoming more prevalent as a healthcare option.

1. **Telemedicine**

Telemedicine, which enables video or phone appointments between a patient and their health care practitioner, benefits both health and convenience. More health care providers are offering to “see” patients by computer and smartphone.

1. **Mass media**

Mass media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet.

1. **Electronic systems**

A electronic system that is powered by electricity, and it processes information’s, data, or any raw material from input into a desired output for further usage in life. Inputs - Electrical or mechanical sensors, which take signals from the physical world (in the form of temperature, pressure, etc.)

1. **Nursing informatics**

Nursing informatics "[is the specialty that integrates nursing science with multiple information and analytical sciences to identify, define, manage and communicate data, information, knowledge and wisdom in nursing practice](https://www.nursingworld.org/nurses-books/nursing-informatics-scope-and-standards-of-practice-2nd-ed/)."

1. **Consumer Empowerment**

* Increased consumer awareness.
* Awareness of the community in early detection and treatment of mental illness as well as proper utilization of available psychiatric hospitals.
* Patients are health care consumers demanding quality health care services at affordable cost with less restrictive and more humane rates.

1. **Deinstitutionalization**

Bringing mental health patients out of the hospital and shifting care to community.

1. **Physician Shortage and Gaps in Service**

Physician shortage can provide the opportunity for new roles, for example, nurse practitioner. In respect to gaps in services, nurses always meet the needs of people for whom services are not available, for example, home visiting nurse.

1. **Demographic Changes**

* Increasing number of the elderly group.
* Type of family (Increased number of nuclear families

1. **Change in Patient Needs**

Wanting a more holistic orientation in health care.

1. **Challenges in Psychiatric Nursing**

* Knowledge development, dissemination and application.
* Overcoming stigma.
* Health care delivery system issues.
* Impact of technology

1. **Educational Programs for the Psychiatric Nurse**

* Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing (The first program was offered in 1956 at NIMHANS, Bengaluru).
* MSc in Psychiatric Nursing (The first program was offered in 1976 at Rajkumari Amrit Kaur College of Nursing, New Delhi).
* M phil in Psychiatric Nursing (1990, MG University, Kottayam).
* Doctorate in Psychiatric Nursing (offered at MAHE, Manipal; RAK College of Nursing, Delhi; NIMHANS, Bengaluru, National Consortium for PhD in Nursing under RGUHS, Karnataka, etc).
* Short term training programs for both the degree and diploma holders in nursing.

1. **Standards of Mental Health Nursing**

The development of standards for nursing practice is a beginning step towards the attainment of quality nursing care. The adoption of standards helps to clarify nurses areas of accountability, since the standards provide the nurse, the health agency, other professionals, patients, and the public, with a basis for evaluating practice. Standards also define the nursing profession’s accountability to the public. These standards are therefore a means for improving the quality of care for mentally ill people.

1. **Development of Code of Ethics**

This is very important for a psychiatric nurse as she takes up independent roles in Psychotherapy, behavior therapy, cognitive therapy, individual therapy, group therapy, maintains patient’s confidentiality, protects his rights and acts as patient’s advocate.

1. **Legal Aspects in Psychiatric Nursing**

Knowledge of the legal boundaries governing psychiatric nursing practice is necessary to protect the public, the patient, and the nurse. The practice of psychiatric nursing is influenced by law, particularly in its concern for the rights of patients and the quality of care they receive. The patient’s right to refuse a particular treatment, protection from confinement, intentional torts, informed consent, confidentiality, and record keeping are a few legal issues in which the nurse has to participate and gain quality knowledge.

1. **Promotion of Research in Mental Health Nursing**

The nurse contributes to nursing and the mental health field through innovations in theory and practice and participation in research.

1. **Cost-effective Nursing Care**

Studies need to be conducted to find out the viability in terms of cost involved in training a nurse and the quality of output in terms of nursing care rendered by her.

1. **Focus of Care**

A psychiatric nurse has to focus care on certain target groups like the elderly, children, women, youth, mentally retarded and chronic mentally ill.

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