



Bowenwork®, Holistic Nursing and Symptom Management Theory

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Introduction

Bowenwork is a gentle, hands-on, healing modality that Holistic Nurses can incorporate into multiple practice settings to address patients' health issues - non-pharmaceutical pain relief, improved mobility and function, and therapeutic relaxation. Most of all, Bowenwork offers safe, caring, human touch.

Bowenwork primarily addresses the autonomic nervous system and abnormal tension patterns in the body by applying light "moves" over specific body locations to elicit relaxation and responses that facilitate healing by resetting the flight/fight response, to the relax/repair and restore homeostasis mode.

The gentle touch and deep relaxation experienced during a Bowenwork session honors holistic healing concepts, in which the practitioner facilitates patients' innate resources towards optimal function and healing.



Bowenwork is suitable for babies, children, pregnant women, acute and chronic health conditions, and frail and elderly people. It can be done in many practice settings, with the client lying on a table or seated; wearing light, loose clothing.



Holistic Nursing in Practice

Holistic nursing focuses on enhancing nurses' awareness of their own wellbeing and self-care, and reflecting that commitment in their care of patients¹. It embraces mindfulness, being fully present in listening to, and observing, how patients' responses to illness are framed by their cultural beliefs, family support, coping strategies and community resources. Holistic nurses seek to impart deep caring and support in motivating patients to adopt positive self-care practices through education and effective communication¹. Nurses can lead by example - including holistic modalities (such as Bowenwork) into their own self-care programs, and recommending safe, holistic techniques for reducing stress reactivity and promoting wellness.

Symptom Management Theory (SMT)

Holistic nurses recognize that wellness and potential health challenges manifest uniquely and across a broad spectrum of individuals' perceptions of wellbeing and functionality.

Symptom Management Theory (SMT), proposed by Humphreys et al.² (2008) is a nursing theory that identifies that people's experiences, disease symptoms and health challenges are mostly unpredictable, and vary due to numerous internal and external factors underpinning their capacity to cope with life situations.

SMT focuses on creating effective, multidimensional strategies to support patients in managing and overcoming their 'dis-ease' experiences (physically, emotionally, psychologically) and navigating healthcare pathways, to optimize outcomes, functionality and quality of life, particularly for people with chronic diseases.



SMT provides holistic nurses with a framework to:

- understand patients' perceptions of their health problems,
- assess the impact of clusters of symptoms that affect function and activities of daily living,
- prioritize care interventions to address symptoms causing the most distress,
- develop effective approaches for improving patients' quality of life, and
- help them adjust to altered health conditions³.

Bowenwork is a broad spectrum intervention that supports self-care, self-efficacy and improvement for many different health conditions, reducing stress symptoms and promoting healing. It has the potential to expand holistic nurses' skills and choices in managing patients' healthcare outcomes.



Future Plans

Limited numbers of published pilot-studies, non-randomised controlled trials, and case-studies indicate that Bowenwork improves patients' recovery from illness, injury and surgery, range of movement, ability to perform activities of daily life and enjoy improved quality of life⁴. Further research on applications of Bowenwork in therapeutic and nursing-related settings, is highly recommended.



References

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