

# Prejudices in Nursing Prison Activities: A Reflection

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## Abstract

Jail nurses need advanced specialist skills and specialized education due to the nursing profession's extremely complicated characteristics and elements in the jail environment. Can nursing treatment in prison settings be impacted by assumptions and prejudices held by nurses? How do nurses view the prison setting and those under custody? The purpose of this study is to examine whether and how preconceptions and prejudices may affect the way care is delivered while also outlining the role of the nurse in the prison environment and current rules. **Methods:** After doing a literature review, the authors gave a questionnaire to a group of nurses, who then discussed their responses and reflections. By examining how stereotypes and biases held by nurses may impact patient care, this study throws fresh insight on nursing in the prison setting.

**Keywords:** Ethics of care• Quality• Safety of care• Nursing

## Introduction

The nursing profession regularly deals with life-or-death scenarios that are frequently quite different from one another and necessitate behavioural decisions that are most frequently pivotal for the user. Critical circumstances can be recognised as ethical dilemmas, which call for a choice. But who makes these choices, exactly? Nurses, like all other health professionals, are expected to pick the appropriate course of action for the patient and to act with competence, relevance, responsibility, and timeliness. To protect this, the Code of Ethics for Nurses states that the nurse actively participates in the analysis of ethical dilemmas encountered in daily practise, even in the event of conflicts arising from different ethical viewpoints, because respecting basic human rights and the ethical principles of the profession is a requirement for its exercise. The Code serves as the foundation for nurses' ethical practise, emphasising the value of moral thought in the humanization of care .The nursing profession has unique and intricate requirements for the prison setting, so much so that a prison nurse needs advanced specialty training and specialised education. Working in a prison requires, above all, adjusting to the setting and its norms, which have a big impact on how work is organised. The following research questions served as the beginning point for the present article's analysis: Can nursing treatment in prison settings be impacted by assumptions and prejudices held by nurses? What do nurses think of the prison setting and those who are in custody? The study seeks to examine whether and how preconceptions and prejudices may affect the way care is provided while also outlining the role of the nurse in the prison setting and current rules.

## Background

The Code of Ethics is a tool that aids nurses in defining and establishing the moral standards that must be upheld when engaging in particular professional nursing activities. It details how nurses must act in accordance with basic human rights and contains the profession's ethical values. The Code of Ethics does not always recognise and address every ethical conundrum, and it does not, above all, take into account the particularities that exist in particular settings, such as prisons. The correctional nurse gives care to those who are imprisoned in a secure setting and may have to make difficult choices. The challenges of providing nursing care in jail stem not only from potential restrictions brought on by the widespread misconceptions and biases that exist today towards prisoners and those who choose to work with them, but also from ethical considerations. First of all, "the nursing profession as a whole may not understand, recognise, or respect the function of correctional nursing. Providing treatment to those who have committed crimes and working with prison populations might make nurses uneasy. Due to stigma and lack of recognition, prison nurses said that they felt excluded from other specialisations as a group.

## The constitutional arrangement of prison health

Because it has an impact on the community as well as the individual, the "state of health" affects more than just the person. Its protection "implies and includes the duty not to harm or endanger the health of others by one's own behaviour," according to the law. The person's physical and mental integrity are connected to the right to health, which is construed as a fundamental constitutional value. This interpretation derives from a long development of jurisprudence, which is also implied by the structure of Articles 2, 3, 27 paragraph 3, and 32 of the Italian Constitution. The social mandate of prison healthcare includes two responsibilities that must be balanced: control, which limits healthcare to responding to individual requests for medical services, and care, which promotes a culture of health, serves as a preventive function, including institutional hygiene, and ensures that the person is given adequate care given the more challenging access to care and frequent vulnerability in custodial settings .In order to offer effective care, health professionals must uphold constitutionally protected rights and increase access to resources for care, preventive, and health restoration.

## Ethical dilemmas of nurses in places of detention:

### Prejudices and stereotypes

Although the bioethics and the code of ethics provide guidelines for conduct, nurses still face moral conundrums. When there is disagreement between values regarding the ideal method of patient care, this occurs. As a result, nurses may feel pressure and frustration in their routine clinical practise as well as professional unhappiness. Additionally, nurses express a lack of training and specialised skills as well as a low level of job satisfaction. The same goes for patient and personal interactions. The time range within which such decisions must be made is another crucial problem. Due to the social stigma attached to the correctional healthcare system, prison nurses face more obstacles than community and hospital nurses and are frequently the target of criticism from the community. An potential to offer inmates with sufficient care is clearly destroyed by the collision between prison security and nursing care, according to a recent qualitative study done in Northern Italy on a sample consisting of 31 correctional nurses. In particular, the authors identified five themes that appeared to conflict with prison nursing practise: the needs of prisoners in terms of healthcare; the negotiation between custody and care; the satisfaction of working in prisons; challenges to providing high-quality care; and safety, which is transversally related to the theme of prisoner manipulation. According to this viewpoint, manipulation can result in further moral conundrums and ethical problems since it exacerbates the already troubled nurse-patient therapeutic interaction.

## Ethics and Bioethics

In the field of healthcare, ethics is the accepted moral code that is applied to the interpretation and evaluation of each clinical scenario. The values that guide the healthcare industry are those that uphold and defend health as a fundamental human right. The "conscience clause" is mentioned in the Code of Ethics. When seen in the perspective of the ideals and principles outlined in the Code of Ethics itself, bioethics assumes relevance. Given that there may be a limit to what individuals can do to prevent their own self-destruction and/or the destruction of their environment, it is recognised as an interdisciplinary subject that spans a wide range. If one views health as a whole state of physical, mental, and social well-being, then the problem of the right to health for inmates acquires significant ethical significance. Correctional officers and prison medical staff are not required nor allowed to make decisions on the health of inmates. Healthcare providers in the community may need to emphasise that patients in prisons should receive ethically acceptable care just like patients who are not incarcerated. However, the idea that prisoners and free people should have equal access to health benefits runs into problems due to security requirements, and it also conflicts with the practise of detention, which causes suffering and illness on its own.

## Discussion

The daily practise of healthcare is complicated and forces nurses and doctors to make decisions that call into question core moral principles. The values of health—understood as a fundamental human right to be safeguarded and protected—inspire the nursing profession. Studies on nurses' contacts with moral dilemmas in daily practise, however, show that the stress of working under tight deadlines and handling a large workload contributes to burnout and ethical insensitivity, impairing the real-world perspective in nursing encounters. Multiple studies on nursing care given in correctional settings have demonstrated that personal and societal perceptions of people who are incarcerated and who should receive healthcare can affect nurses' decision-making and practise, supporting the findings of the questionnaire. This is due to the fact that some prison nurses are aware of the allegations brought against the individuals they care for. The findings of the questionnaire may naturally prompt the question of whether it is appropriate for a doctor and/or nurse to be aware of the crime a prisoner has committed. The response is subjective, but as persons and medical professionals it can have a significant impact on nurses' perceptions of others knowing the crime they have committed; as a result, this may also have an impact on caregiving practises and attitudes towards them. It would be fascinating to look into whether and how knowledge, (re)education, consciousness raising, and humanization might help to correct stereotypes, prejudices, and preconceptions.

In response to the question of whether the Code of Nursing Ethics aids in the resolution of ethical difficulties, it was found that 65.4% of the applicants believed it to be of no use. Based on these findings, it would be appropriate to look into the particular motivation behind the responses in order to finish the study. Professionals frequently struggle with this since they come into contact with people's misery, agony, suffering, and guilt frequently. The patient/prisoner is a patient category that includes a variety of dynamics, traits, and issues that, when used in the setting of a prison, can make the nurses' job challenging. In fact, despite the fact that the prison is a setting where a nurse can practise her profession, very little training is frequently given for this setting, which necessitates health interventions in accordance with the demand for health needs.

## Conclusion

The current study demonstrates that majority of the individuals had never contemplated working in a prison environment, and just a small percentage of subjects had prior experience there. This study emphasizes how healthcare professionals typically neglect the jail environment because it is still largely unknown and frequently filled with preconceptions. Additionally, according to the data, most nurses would be influenced by the type of crime the patient had committed, particularly in cases of pedophilia, and this could have an effect on how they cared for their patients. This is crucial because it demonstrates how, despite the Code of Ethics' instruction that nurses should treat everyone equally, personal views and moral codes sadly prevail in settings like prisons, which can lead to internal conflicts. Positive aspects were also found, such as the fact that 80% of the nurses participated in the study would treat all patients regardless of the crime committed and just 20% would be impacted. In fact, the lack of focus on this area throughout nursing education is the starting point, which results in health workers having a limited understanding of the issues and dynamics that exist in this field. The current study further confirms this paucity of understanding. A large number of the respondents in the sample who were interviewed said they thought prisons were dangerous places. This claim demonstrates how perception overrides reality. In reality, because prisons are areas subject to harsher kinds of regulation, more violent incidents can happen there than in emergency departments of hospitals. Nurses also emphasised the necessity for specialised training that would enable them to handle ethical dilemmas. The uniqueness of correctional nursing is, in fact, emphasised through specialised training. The assessment of the true needs underlying the healthcare of the prison population and the promotion of collaboration between prison care and the healthcare system seem to be crucial in addition to the requirement to provide ethical training for jail personnel.