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Knowledge, attitudes and practices of nurses on the patient's charter: a study at the Volta Regional Hospital, Ho

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Many countries in their attempt to protect the rights of patients, enacted laws that enable health care providers to respect the rights of patients, but very little has been done in Africa, and Ghana is no exception. Human rights in patients care is a global concern due to the fact that a person seeking health is vulnerable and can be easily abused by health care providers. Over the past decade, there have been complaints from the Ghanaian public about abusive behaviour of nurses and midwives toward patients who access health care in Ghana's public hospitals and health care centers. In 2002, the Ghana Health Service (GHS) launched the patients' charter to be implemented by health care facilities, for the provision of quality service and more importantly, to protect the rights of patients. The GHS therefore, expects health care providers to be sensitive to patients' socio-cultural and religious backgrounds, age, gender and other differences as well as the needs of patients with disabilities. The objectives of the study were to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses on the patients' charter. The study was an exploratory study with methodical triangulation using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study setting was the Volta Regional Hospital, Ho in the Volta Region of Ghana. The population was all nurses working in the Volta Regional Hospital. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and direct observation using a check list. The study shows that nurses are not implementing the patient charter and do not show any good attitudes towards the patients in the care setting despite their knowledge of the content of the charter. The nurses do not respect the rights in the patients although they claim to be knowledgeable about the charter. It is recommended that monitoring mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that nurses in the performance of their duties and responsibilities to respect and protect the patients' rights. There is the need to educate nurses adequately on the implementation of the patient charter.

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