Virginia Henderson's Need Theory

And the concept of the Mind Body Connection

An Analysis

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Abstract

Virginia Henderson has been a contributor to nursing knowledge since the 1930's. Her needs theory although influenced by Maslow and Thorndike's need theories and makes them applicable to nursing (currentnursing.com, 2012; McEwen & Wills, 2011). Her concept of the body and mind being interrelated and inseparable have now become what is called the mind body connection. By examining what is going on in the person's mind, environment, and their health, we can gain a better picture of how to develop interventions that are specific to each patient. With patient specific interventions come improved patient outcomes.

# Virginia Henderson's Need Theory

As early as 1964, Virginia Henderson was writing about how the body and mind are interrelated and inseparable and that the patient as biopsychosocial needs and as a sum of many parts (currentnursing.com, 2012). Her grand nursing theory, included in nursing textbooks of the time, guided nursing knowledge from the 1930s through the 1990's and the 14 concepts from her Needs Theory continue to guide nursing care today (McEwen & Wills, 2011). Henderson's theory developed from her philosophy of the way all nurses should think and act. She believed that it is the duty of the nurse to assist a patient in sickness or health and the performance of the activities necessary for health or recovery (or a dignified, comfortable death) that the patient would perform unaided if they have the strength of will or the knowledge to do so (currentnursing.com, 2012). The nurse should be there to serve and be dedicated to the patient night and day. Additionally, she taught that nurses should have a higher education in both Arts and Sciences.

Her theory takes aspects from both Maslow and Thorndike's need theories and makes them applicable to nursing (currentnursing.com, 2012; McEwen & Wills, 2011). Henderson's need theory easily shows that she felt that the person was a sum of their parts. The Theory has 14 components; components one through nine physiological, while components ten and fourteen are psychological, addressing learning and communication, the eleventh component addresses the spiritual, and the twelfth and thirteenth are sociological (currentnursing.com, 2012). The sum of these parts represents the whole of the patients biopsychosocial needs.  Her theory shows interrelation of concepts from other disciplines and interactions. Henderson spent many years as a nursing educator and a prolific author. There is not a day that goes by that you do not hear about patient centered care if you are working as a nurse today. This is not a new concept because Henderson talked about it in an article written in 1964 (Henderson, 1964). Our concepts of nursing care are still in use today and continue to guide new nursing knowledge.

## Theories Contribution to Development of Nursing Knowledge

The purpose of the Henderson needs theory is to guide nurses in providing care to restore the patient's ability to independently care for themselves or to provide them peaceful dignity and during the dying process. The theory uses the same for concepts of the nursing paradigm: person, environment, health, and nursing. Under the concept of person, she relates that the body and mind are inseparable and interrelated (currentnursing.com, 2012). This is like the concept of the mind body connection that is driving integrated medicine and wellness clinics today. Her theory is semantic and easy to follow with the 14 components to guide the nurse’s daily care. In Henderson's need theory one ideal was that the nurse focuses on the patient rather than on the tasks and restore them to of the highest independent function possible. Her concepts are well defined but lack interrelatedness. She does not have a concept for the holistic nature of humanity. She touches on the mind body connection, but she focuses more on functional improvement of the person. She assumes that patients want to return to a healthful state (McEwen & Wills, 2011).

Each of her concepts can easily be reworded into a question and then tested, which makes this theory perfect for further research. Although Henderson's work is parsimonious in its presentation, it is complex in its scope. The 14 concepts in her theory encompass the whole of the practice of nursing. Her vision of the nurse's role in patient care impacts the complexity of the nurse’s role. Her contributions to the literature on nursing extended from the 1930’s to the 1990’s. Henderson's work has strengthened the focus of nursing practice, confirmed the value of tested interventions in assisting individuals to regain independent functioning, and has impacted nursing evidence-based research to improve nursing care (McEwen & Wills, 2011). In defining the individual as having a body and mind that are and interrelated in inseparable, she opened the door to expand the nurse's view of the individual and their needs. Furthermore, by expanding the nurse’s view she opened the door for further research on the body mind connection and complementary and alternative therapies to improve patient outcomes.

# The Body Mind Connection

Many nursing schools offer some information on therapeutic touch (TT) and there are some nurses who know about the mind body connection and the use of alternative or complementary therapies. Understanding how the mind affects the body would help nurses use Henderson's needs theory with a completely new perspective. Evaluating the patients' needs using the body mind connection allows a more thorough care plan to address the underlying mental and emotional stressors contributing to illness and will help bring the patient back to their highest level of independent function (McEwen & Wills, 2011). For centuries, physicians and non-physicians alike have acknowledged the people's minds could influence disease in their bodies (Brown, Emotions and disease in history, 2008). Science is now beginning to prove what these early Physicians and non-Physicians thought. But what is the body mind connection?

# Analysis of the Body Mind Connection

## The Body Mind Connection Defined

The body-mind connection has also been known as the Biopsychosocial model (BPS) (Wikipedia, 2012). This model posits that the biological, psychological, and social factors all play a role in disease and illness at him and functioning. Body mind medicine uses our emotions and thoughts to improve wellness (University of Maryland Medical Center, 2011). According to Dictionary.com, (n.d.) mind-body is an adjective defined as "taking into account the physiological, psychic, and spiritual connections between the state of the body and that of the mind: mind-body medicine." Mind-body is "of, involving, or resulting from the interrelationship between one's physical health and the state of one's mind or spirit." (American Heritage Dictionary, n.d.). According to the Mind-Body Connection Glossary the mind body connection is definded as the mind-body connection reveals the emotional, mental and spiritual elements of physical dis-ease, common illnesses, accidents and ailments with possible psychosomatic (mind-body) meanings. "The meanings provided for each ailment are designed to offer a perspective on the cause of dis-ease within the body" (Kent, 2009). Scientifically speaking research shows the body mind connection as a multidisciplinary field of inquiry called Psychoneuoimmunology and in how the mind influences the immune system and the neuroendocrine system and ultimately how these interactions impact health and well-being (Lewis, 2002). Debbie Shapiro (1990) calls the body mind connection a result of imbalances in the energy system of the body.

## Attributes

The leading theme or attribute of the mind-body connection is that how you think, your emotions, and your mental status, and your spiritual wellbeing all affect your health. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the idea of the mind body connection has existed for centuries (Brown, Emotions and disease in history, 2008). From Hippocrates (ca. 460 B.C.-ca. 370 B.C.) there was discussion of how the mind and emotions interacted with health. Although called the four "humors": black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood at the time, it was noted that an imbalance in the humors led to disease (Brown, The balance of passions, 2008). Finally, body-mind research has advanced from simply theorizing that the mind, emotions, and stress affect our health to actually proving it by relating it to specific mechanisms (i.e., inhibition of the sympathetic nervous system, increases stress response, and cortical brain activation). Neurovisceral integration credits the central autonomic network of brain nuclei with emotional regulation of the expression of stress related pathology (Taylor, Goehler, Galper, Innes, & Bourguignon, 2010).

## Model, Related, and an illegitimate case

### Model

The concept of the body mind connection has many practice situations and interventions. One example of a practice situation with the body-mind connection is a 46y/o male with fibromyalgia who had been suffering from unrelieved pain for over three years (McCaffrey, 2003). He described his situation as hopeless. The nurse used therapeutic communication techniques to delve deeper into his emotional status and his mental status. Through their interaction, he revealed that his wife was an alcoholic and had become verbally abusive toward him. The nurse listened therapeutically and referred him to the appropriate resources. A few months later the nurse ran into the same patient who relayed to her that he had entered counseling, left his wife after she refused to get help, and was completely off all medications and managing his pain with Healing Touch (HT) treatments.

### Related

M.J. a 28 y/o mother of 3 comes in to discuss her 14-year-old daughter's behavior. She relates that her daughter is always tired, and she is concerned with how much she sleeps. With her friends, she is full of energy and very active but as soon as she gets home, she goes into her room and nods off. During the interview with the teenager, the nurse learns that she is just bored at home, she recently broke up with her boyfriend and all her friends are dating his friends. Using mind body theory fatigue can be related to inner tiredness from having to cope, weariness with life, or depression (Shapiro, 1990). This does not apply to this teenage girl. On the other hand, Anemia is related to a lack of substance or strength in love (Shapiro, 1990). Lab tests are ordered, and results show anemia.

### Illegitimate

J.D., age 37, was admitted to the hospital after a car crash where he suffered a fractured leg and a concussion. He was complaining of a headache. The nurse assesses his pain and brings him some pain medication. When reviewing her knowledge of the body mind connection she knows that a headache can be the result of the arteries becoming constricted and causing intense pulsating pressure area. According to Shapiro (1990), the arteries and veins both give and receive love. Therefore, constriction to the head indicates an inability to express such feelings. If the nurse were to attempt to pursue this line of thought it would not be beneficial to the patient as he merely has a concussion because of the accident. Although this is a stressful and most likely emotional time for J.D., it does not necessarily mean his headache is caused by a body-mind connection.

## Measure the concept

Utilizing the knowledge available on the body-mind connection there are several books and databases that define different conditions and their related mind causes. This makes measuring the concept easy. As mentioned in the model, related and illegitimate cases, knowing what part of the body is affected can help narrow down the cause. An energy medicine practitioner uses their hands to measure the energy field for imbalances. Additionally, a pendulum can be used to measure the chakras or major energy vortexes of the body. By knowing where the imbalance(s) is the energy worker or nurse trained in TT or Healing Touch (HT) can evaluate the mind body area and help guide the patient to look deeper into their disease for meaning (Hover-Kramer, 2001). Interventions are then developed for the specific imbalance and the nurse helps to rebalance the energy system of the patient. Following treatment, the energy field is again measured and remaining imbalance noted in the chart to compare with the next healing session. Results are based on a 1-10 scale of pain, emotional, mental, and spiritual status. After the intervention these are rated again, the difference is noted, and an overall feeling of wellness score recorded (Hover-Kramer, 2001).

# Concept Application

The body-mind connection is easy to apply to any health problem. By utilizing the available knowledge about how each area of the body relates to the mind nurses can help their patients enter a state of wellness despite their current health problems.

## Case study

A 45-year-old male with Chronic Pain related to Fibromyalgia. He had been in pain for over 8 years and was taking narcotic analgesics with little effect. On his first session of HT, he described his pain as 10/10 with “hot spots” in his shoulders, wrists, and hips. He only received temporary relief that only lasted a day or two during the first few 60 min. HT sessions. However, during the 19 sessions of HT, he discovered that he was being co-dependent with his wife and that he needed to make some changes in order to stop being sick. With the use of the HT technique of chakra connection, his energy field began to stay in balance. He ended up asking for a divorce and going into counseling. By our last session he had pain of 4/10 and no more hot spots, was enjoying life and looking at what he could do for work instead of continuing his disability. According to Shapiro (1990) Pain in the hip is related to relationship issues, the wrists are related to what we feel others are doing to us, and in the shoulders can mean we are unhappy with what we are doing and wish we could be doing something else. These are just a few small examples of how a person can suffer from chronic pain and illness related to a mind body connection. It has been over 6 months since I last treated this patient. Currently, he is no longer taking narcotic analgesics, and he is still at a tolerable level of pain that is no longer impairing his ability to function (Lavadour-Olivas, 2008).

Therapeutic communication is another intervention that helps the nurse find meaning in the patient's illness that can lead to decreased stress and improved outcomes. An example of this is a 58y/o male patient that came in with severe back pain. He has a history of impotence, prediabetes, and headaches. During therapeutic communication, he revealed that he has been the caretaker of his wife for many years. He discusses his frustration over his wife, never showing him appreciation for all that he does for her. The nurse does a HT back treatment on him and afterword his pain has decreased by 5 points on the 1-10 pain scale. According to Shapiro (1990), lower back problems stem from resentment of others, feelings of having no support, sexual dysfunction and are related to the base and second chakras.

The final example is an 18 y/o female in with pyelonephritis. She has recently moved away from her husband and everything she tells the nurse has been negative. She is constantly on the call bell and appears to be afraid to be alone. The nurse notices that she never has any visitors and asks her if she is expecting any. She makes a long signing noise and says no her friends and family are too busy. The nurse makes sure to spend extra time with this patient and helps her feel more secure by explaining everything in terms she can understand. On the second day, the patient allows the nurse to do a HT intervention of spiral opening (Hover-Kramer, 2001). After the HT treatment, the nurse notices that the patient is no longer on the call light and seems calmer with the rest of the hospital stay. Shapiro, (1990) notes that the kidneys are how we eliminate negative emotions and fear. By using her knowledge of the mind body connection she was able to help this scared patient feel more comfortable and relaxed.

# Conclusion

Virginia Henderson's need theory has helped nursing begin down the path to patient centered care. Her concept of the body and mind being interrealted and inseperable continue to be present today and even more knowledge about the concept is available. Science is now able to prove the the mind body connection exists and is directly related to our emotional, mental, and spitiual wellbeing. Stress produces chemical neurotransmitters that can be measured and are now known to effect the immune system. The BPS model and Psychoneuoimmunology are continuing to research how the body mind connection affects our health. Working with complementary and alternative health practices help patients attain a sense of wellness when the body mind connection is utilized to help them understand their conditions. Although more research continues to be needed, evidence shows that nusing interventions using the bdoy mind connection improve patient outcomes.

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