Fact Sheet: What is Holistic Nursing?

Florence Nightingale, who believed in care that focused on unity, wellness, and the interrelationship of human beings and their environment, is considered to be the “founder” of holistic nursing.

Holistic nursing…

• Is defined as “all nursing that has healing the whole person as its goal,” (AHNA 1998) and integrates complementary and alternative approaches (CAM) into clinical practice

• Is recognized by the American Nurses Association as an “official nursing specialty,” with its own defined scope and standards of practice

A holistic nurse…

• Is a legally licensed nurse who takes a mind-body-spirit-emotion approach to the practice of nursing

• Serves as a bridge between conventional healing and complementary and alternative healing practices, and is trained in both healthcare models

• Works in a variety of settings – from hospitals to universities to private practice

• May specialize in one or more modalities (or methods of healing), such as acupuncture, chiropractic, or energetic healing

Complementary or alternative medicine…

• Refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises. These practices can be applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being. In industrialized countries, adaptations of traditional medicine are termed “Complementary” or “Alternative” (CAM). (World Health Organization)

• Is utilized by 65 to 80 percent of the world’s population, and approximately 42 percent of all Americans (JAMA).

• Is being studied by The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), the Federal Government’s lead agency for scientific research on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).


Holism…

• In health care, is the belief that in the treatment of medical conditions, all of one’s physical, mental, emotional and social conditions – not just physical symptoms – should be taken into account