

# Nursing Challenges in the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic Era

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Thus far, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has upended the lives of children and their families as health systems bend under pressure, borders close, and schools and businesses shutter. The COVID-19 pandemic affects people, households, and communities. United Nations (UN) agencies warn that the economic impact of COVID-19 and worsening inequalities will fuel malnutrition for billions in Asia and the Pacific [1]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, cases in Korea have been lower than those of other large countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and Japan, etc. As such, Korea has obtained efficient results in quarantine and its response to COVID-19 in many areas. Numerous studies have been reported on COVID-19 in various fields. Representatively, mathematicians have helped determine the optimal stage of prevention measure by making prediction models through infection index models.

Meanwhile, nursing scholars who are distant from the medical field are unable to respond to the COVID-19 situation. We are facing challenges regarding research, education, and nursing practice. What are the characteristics of patients with coronavirus as a new infectious disease? What are some challenges in didactic and clinical courses during the pandemic and gaps in current nursing education and practice? What are the areas of nursing research to be pursued?

To positively affect policy-making during the pandemic, research has been able to bring the lessons surrounding the concerns of patients to light [2,3]. After the declaration of the

COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020, American news channels such as CNN, MSNBC, and ABC news from the United States broadcasted nurses working in the front lines. In doing so, they reported on the insufficient protective equipment and tears of nurses, praising their hard work and heroism every day. The Korean situation has especially received worldwide attention in epidemiological investigations and COVID-19 prevention. Break-through proposals for diagnostic testing methods, such as drive-throughs and walk-throughs, were even addressed in US Senate and House congressional hearings.

Nurses are positioned at the very front lines of the battle against COVID-19. However, many commentators on social media have reported that nursing has not benefited from an amplified enough voice and that the interests and concerns of nursing have not been sufficiently acknowledged or addressed. Further, nursing is discussed as a commodity and a transactional element of a supply chain [4].

Numerous Korean nurses are spontaneously and involuntarily facing COVID-19 in roles that range from providing bedside nursing care for people affected by the disease to establishing healthcare policies [5]. Their voices in the nursing field are critically influential in understanding evidence-based health care practice, care delivery, and policy [6].

In the editorial, Lake [7] stated that "Nursing research provides answers during crises. In a time of profound upheaval, risk, and strain, it is reassuring to have evidence-based solutions to

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the challenges confronting our health care system and its clinicians.” Furthermore, the nursing discipline allows nursing researchers and theorists to develop theories that are more congruent with the nature of nursing. As such, it considers the diversity of nursing clients, the complexity of experiences, the responses of human beings in the face of illness situations or calamities, and the dynamic nature of environments. For instance, the situational-specific theory by Im and Meleis [8] has unique properties. These properties include the specificity of the nursing phenomenon that aims to explicate matters within a specific context, and to incorporate diversities such as culture, gender, educational background, religion, sexual orientation, and political preference in nursing phenomena.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, new scientific nursing knowledge provides essential information regarding the management of patients [9]. Thus, an increasing number of publications focused on COVID-19 have been published since it was first identified.

Oh & Kim [5] reported a bibliometric analysis of COVID-19 research published in 48 nursing journals. The content analysis found 10 data-based original articles or reviews, which addressed the topics of nursing training, nurses’ psychosocial status such as work stress and willingness to practice in an epidemic area, nursing education, nursing guidelines such as health care training apps, care for women and infants, public health interventions, and remote health care for cardiovascular patients. Finally, it addressed protection for nurses such as mask efficiency. Previous studies have been conducted in various scopes, although it is about one or two for each topic [5]. In Korea, research was predominantly conducted on the experience of nurses caring for COVID-19 patients and needs and perception for infection control in nursing students.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic situation, we have observed that even with the same disease, the outcomes vary depending on the target patient and environment (e.g., culture, policy, surrounding circumstances, etc.). In Korea, the COVID-19 often occurred in religious facilities such as churches. In the case of the United States, coping methods differed depending on their culture that emphasizes autonomy, and educational level. Thus, it is necessary to conduct research on which nursing care is required for various people and environments. The targets for nursing are in-

dividuals, families and communities, and humans are beings with different adaptation abilities that can cope with all stimuli in the face of their environment. In addition, while humans have common needs, each has unique characteristics. Therefore, it is time to reconsider the essence of nursing amid the special circumstances of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Once this pandemic comes to an end, we will hopefully be able to gain further insight into the nature of this tragic loss of life to better understand the factors that contributed, and are contributing to these deaths [4]. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet; therefore, future nursing studies will be needed, including research, education, practice, and policy aspects.

Those are physical, psychological, and environmental characteristics of the population which is vulnerable to COVID-19; disease characteristics of children and adolescents by age group and community-based care before and after COVID-19. The quality of life of the elderly due to the inability of families to visit the nursing home and the establishment of coping strategies and support for people suffering from “Corona Blues” due to socio-economic difficulties must be considered. Further, these characteristics include nursing care for mental and psychological issues such as stress, depression and anxiety, uncertainty about the end of the disease and support for people who reported that they felt guilty regarding infecting family members who were then hospitalized. The development of new nursing diagnoses based on the situation; studies on alternative clinical practice teaching methods and nursing education programs for infection control including personal protective equipment must also be incorporated. The workload of nursing personnel in intensive care units or nursing homes is instrumental as well. Specially, further studies are needed in including nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities which provide care for some of the most vulnerable populations in society, including older people and those with chronic medical conditions [10].

In terms of policy, it is necessary to reflect on whether policymakers are considering simply paying expensive compensation to nurses who work hard and have to end the COVID-19 situation. The International Council of Nurses states that nurses are central to the delivery of health care and that they are making invaluable contributions to the health of people globally [11]. The nursing discipline and profession have been strengthened through

the efforts of strong and effective leaders in education, research, and clinical practice. Therefore, nursing researchers and educators will need to identify the essence of nursing required by the COVID-19 era through various studies and find the basis for appropriate scientific nursing.

People are asking for care not only for confirmed cases but also those isolated, which should be supported by nursing research. Journal of Korean Academy of Nursing is expecting evidence-based papers reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic situation and opens to publish them in October 2021.

- Cases in Korea (as of 12 a.m. on February 13, 2021) have reached 83,199 confirmed cases from 6,045,086 performed tests, with a 1.4% positivity rate.
- There are 73,227 people released from isolation [12].

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Jeung-Im Kim has been the Editor-in-Chief of JKAN since 2020 and Mi Yu started one of Associate Editors since 2021. Except for that, no potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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Please contact the corresponding author for data availability.

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