

**Research focus:** ‘ A Health Care Team’s Use of Discriminatory and Prejudiced Language towards a Drug-Addicted Young Woman and its Consequences.’.

**Key words :** nurse – therapeutic relationship – addiction – empathy - emotions

**Abstract :**

*To what extent can nurses’ attitudes and opinions towards patients suffering from addiction exert influence on the care process?*

**This research paper offers explanations as to why** some health professionals are led to use discriminatory and prejudicial language towards **a drug-addicted young woman. I was made aware of these issues after a situation that occurred** in one of my first-year **placements**. Since then, I have been drawn to understand other people’s point of view, and **this work presents an overview of my endeavour**. Patients with addiction disorders deserve our earnest and utmost consideration, for they are torn among feelings of denial, delusions and suffering. Addiction is classified as a mental illness, **albeit not always widely acknowledged and accepted as such**. Nonetheless, health professionals appear to be the best ally in the patients’ ongoing struggle for recuperation.

**This research paper expresses the values and moral standards that I hold dear**, especially those with regard to my conception of the nursing profession, **of efficient care**, and of patients. It is evident that **social representations** – which also occur in care settings – may generate a climate of distrust **impairing the therapeutic relationship**, and its ethical quality.

**This reflection was enhanced by** engaging with qualified nurses and a psychologist, and their **input** was a significant and valued contribution.

Social representations, empathy and emotions are concepts involved in **nurse-patient interactions**. Therefore, it is worth emphasizing the need for medical personnel **to be trained to hone both technical and interpersonal skills**. **The outcome of this study highlights** the importance of the words and attitudes we adopt when addressing substance abuse patients, for language plays a pivotal role **in building and shaping a positive therapeutic relationship**.

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