Nursing Education and Specialty

Dr. Margaret Newman started her journey to becoming a nurse after being the primary caregiver to her mother, who died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Margaret went on to get her Master’s degree in Nursing in 1964, and later received her Ph.D. in Nursing in 1971. Following receiving her Ph.D., Margaret began her teaching career and began developing her theory of health as expanded consciousness.

Nursing Theory, Concepts, and Propositions

The main theoretical concepts of Dr. Margaret Newman’s theory, health as expanded consciousness (HEC) include health, expanding consciousness, pattern, pattern recognition, disorganization, choice point, and transformation. Newman defines consciousness as the informational capacity of human systems to interact with the environment. Expanding consciousness means the person is becoming more coexistent with the universe because the human being is developing and their consciousness expanding. Pattern is another main concept within Newman’s theory. Pattern regulation is important because it helps patients find meaning and understanding. Choice point is a main concept in the theory as it is a sign that change is needed because the pattern is disorganized. The final concept in the Human as Expanding Consciousness theory is transformation, which is all of the changes that take place that occur at the same time. The main idea of this theory is that the patient and nurse will gain insight on the patient’s illness and support the patient’s development, which can be achieved with a trustworthy relationship between the nurse and the patient.

Application of Meta-Paradigms in Nursing Theory

The four metaparadigm bases are Person, Environment, Health, and Nursing. To begin to understand the theory of HEC as a whole, one must first understand how each of these metaparadigm play a role in the theory. Newman describes the “Person” metaparadigm by stating, “The person does not possess consciousness- the person is consciousness.” (Newman, 1992) Newman describes the “Health” metaparadigm as being between the two poles of disease and non-disease. The state of the person between these two poles represents that person’s state of health. Next, the “Environment” is anything that a person is surrounded by or faced with; however, Newman believes everything in the environment is interconnected or interrelated within some context or another. Lastly, Newman views the metaparasigm of “Nursing” as a nurse-client partnership in which both partners will grow into a higher level of consciousness through interactions.
Theory Implications

Dr. Margaret Newman viewed nursing not as medical work to fix physical problems, but more of a spiritual and emotional process. Newman believes that it is the job of the nurse to go through the patient’s struggle with the patient, and by doing this, both the nurse and the patient will reach a higher level of consciousness. Contributed highly to Newman’s theory of HEC, there is a new focus on the importance of the caring approach to nursing, which is being stressed to new nurses today. By using the priori method to conduct research, Newman proved that other forms of research can have significant impacts on nursing and other health care fields, even if the scientific process method is not used. Essentially she opened the door for the implication of other theories and ideas that aren’t grounded in positivistic research. (George, 2011)

Education and Nursing Specialty
(Emmerson)

In 1954, Margaret Newman received her first baccalaureate degree in home economics and English from Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Not long after, her mother was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Newman became her primary caregiver; and after her mother’s death, she became very interested in the career of nursing.

Dr. Margaret Newman received her Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) from the University of Tennessee, Memphis in 1962. A year later, Dr. Margaret Newman entered a medical-surgical graduate program in nursing at the University of California, San Francisco. Margaret received her master’s degree here in 1964. During the three years following, Margaret served as a director of nursing of a clinical research center and as an assistant professor of nursing at the University of Tennessee in Memphis.

The next chapter of Margaret’s nursing education would take place at New York University, from which she received her Ph.D. in Nursing in 1971. For the next six years, Dr. Margaret Newman taught alongside nursing theorist, Martha Rogers, at New York University. Margaret then went on to become the professor-in-charge of graduate study in nursing at Penn State in the fall of 1977.

During Margaret’s teaching career, she was developing nursing theories, one of which being her theory of health as expanding consciousness. Margaret continued expanding on her nursing theories when she accepted the job as a nurse theorist at the University of Minnesota. In 1996 Margaret Newman retired from teaching. Today, Dr. Margaret Newman is Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota, and she continues to write and build on the current bulk of nursing knowledge.

Theory
(Westphal)

The Health as Expanding Consciousness (HEC) has many aspects throughout the theory. The HEC is “reflected in pattern. A person’s wholeness is identified by pattern
and is a reflection of the dynamic person-environment interaction. Through pattern recognition, meaningful people and events are discussed as the lived experience is uncovered” (George, 2011, p. 437).

**Theoretical Concepts**

(Westphal)

The main theoretical concepts of the HEC include health, expanding consciousness, pattern, pattern recognition, disorganization, choice point, and transformation. Newman defines health as expanding consciousness. The concept of expanding consciousness is based on consciousness, which is the informational capacity of human systems to interact with the environment. Expanding consciousness becomes more coexistent with the universe because the human being is developing and their consciousness expands. Pattern is another theoretical concept that is a part of this theory, and this is based on the movement, diversity, rhythm, and relatedness. The movement of the pattern is diverse, but follows a rhythm. Pattern is relatedness as human energy fields increase one another and transformation begins to occur. The relatedness aspect of a pattern is also a reflection of a person-environment interaction. Pattern regulation occurs if you’re an observer. It’s not possible to guess the total pattern because only a piece of a pattern can be known; however, the pattern is revealed as time is exposed. Pattern regulation is important as it helps patients find meaning and understanding. With patients finding meaning of what is occurring, consciousness begins progressing faster. Disorganization occurs when more information is given and a change in the original pattern occurs. Disorganization happens because the new information does not fit in the existing pattern. Choice point is a main concept in the theory as it is a sign that change is needed because the pattern is disorganized. The final concept in the Human as Expanding Consciousness theory is transformation, which is all of the changes that take place that occur at the same time. (George, 2011, p.437-438).

**Propositions**

(Westphal)

Margaret Newman believes that the main goal of nursing is to comprehend health and the quality of life from an open-minded perspective, and assist the clients to do the same (Bateman & Merryfeather, 2014). “HEC focuses on clients’ wholeness; allows people to explore and express themselves genuinely; recognizes that individuals’ states of health are important indicators of areas of personal growth; and fuses the internal and external environments of clients and nurses to allow for mutual self-actualization” (Bateman & Merryfeather, 2014). The main idea of this theory is that the patient and nurse will gain insight on the patient’s illness and support the patient’s development, which can be achieved with a trustworthy relationship between the nurse and the patient (Bateman & Merryfeather, 2014). By having a strong relationship with the patient, nurses are capable of being more self-aware, which advances their level of consciousness after they help their patients achieve the goals (Bateman & Merryfeather, 2014).
Application of Meta-Paradigms in Nursing Theory
(Riggins)

Significance of the Metaparadigms

Margaret Newman’s theory of Health as an Expanding Consciousness can be understood more in depth when evaluated with the four metaparadigms of nursing. Each metaparadigm constitutes its own contextual basis that can be brought together with the other metaparadigms to form a larger whole; becoming a fully formed and functional theory. Without each subdivision of the metaparadigms a reliable, complete theory could not be formulated. The four metaparadigm bases are Person, Environment, Health, and Nursing. Understanding the layout of each of these is paramount to being able to delve into the underlying content that makes up Margaret Newman’s HEC Theory.

The Four Metaparadigms

As described within Margaret Newman’s HEC Theory each metaparadigm takes on a unique division from other theories. Margaret Newman describes the Person, or Human aspect, as unitary. It cannot be divided up into parts and is inseparable from the larger unitary field. She goes on to say “Persons as individuals, and human beings as a species, are identified by their patterns of consciousness… The person does not possess consciousness- the person is consciousness.” She finishes up describing the human metaparadigm by stating people are “centers for consciousness” (Newman, 1992). Next we can look at Newman’s Health paradigm. She summarizes Health by describing it as, “Health and illness are synthesized as health - the fusion on one state of being (disease) with its opposite (non-disease) results in what can be regarded as health” (Newman, 1992). This description of health can be understood as a state of health being acquired by looking at a situation as if it was at two poles; The poles being disease and non-disease. Where a person is located between these two poles is a representation of their health. Next, Newman describes the Environment. The environment is the surroundings or conditions that one is faced with. However, from Newman’s point of view, the Environment can be viewed in a different light. She described the environment as a “universe of open systems” (Newman, 1992). Meaning everything is interconnected or interrelated within some context or another. Lastly, Newman describes Nursing itself. This metaparadigm Newman views as a nurse-client partnership in which both partners will grow into a higher level of consciousness through interactions. Newman defines nursing as being “caring in the human health experience” (Newman, 1992).

Theory Implications
(Crews)

Margaret Newman’s theory greatly influenced nursing practice, education, and research. Newman viewed the process of nursing and what nurses were supposed to do for patients completely different than the traditional viewpoint of nursing which focuses on fixing nursing diagnoses. Instead she viewed nursing not as medical work to fix
physical problems, but more of a spiritual and emotional process. She completely rejects the five step nursing process from her theory and views nursing as entering a partnership with a patient to help them through an illness situation. During this partnership it is the nurses job to be there for them and go through the struggles of a disease, live it with the patient, and to it. To her this is the center joy that comes from nursing, being there with a client as the go through a struggle. By doing this both the client and the nurse involved are able to reach a higher level of consciousness together. In other words, she focuses on the idea it being a nurse’s job to being caring toward a patient, help them come to terms with their disease, and accept the unpredictable nature of life.

When it comes to nursing education it seems that Newman wanted to stress the idea to new nurses how important the aspect of caring is in nursing. Caring is the means by which a nurse helps the patient through their disease process and to reach a higher consciousness of understanding. As a result of this idea teaching new nurses the importance, and ways they can be caring to their client is now being given much more attention. There is now a new focus on teaching how to be caring and medically help patients instead of just physically helping them recover.

The impact Newman’s theory had on research is that it illustrated how nonscientific process research can have important implications for nursing as well. She conducted research using the a priori method. This method of research isn’t often accepted in the health care field because it isn’t considered as reliable as scientific process research. The main argument is that a priori can’t prove causation the way scientific research can. Newman proved that other forms of research can have significant impacts on nursing and other health care fields. Essentially she opened the door for the implication of other theories and ideas that aren’t grounded in positivistic research. (George, 2011).
References


