

Imogene King's Theory: A Nursing Case Study of a Psychotic Client With Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection

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The nursing theory of Imogene King provided an effective framework for viewing the complex interactions that occurred when a psychotic client with newly diagnosed human immunodeficiency virus infection (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome-related complex) was admitted to a general psychiatric unit. The interacting systems identified in King's theory assisted in the evaluation of the relationship that formed between the client and the nurses and provided a plan for action that led to the successful achievement of nursing care goals.

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THE NURSES that worked on the psychiatric inpatient unit recognized Harry when he was admitted. The 29-year-old male patient had been hospitalized there many times in the past and the staff members were familiar with Harry's homosexual life-style and his delusional psychotic behavior. However, when he was readmitted with the added medical diagnosis of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, the situation changed. A relationship with a familiar patient became fearful and uncomfortable. The members of the psychiatric nursing staff on the inpatient unit found themselves confronting all of the intense psychological issues surrounding acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and HIV infection as well as the additional dimension of a preexisting psychosis. The nursing theory of Imogene King (1981) provided the psychiatric clinical nurse specialist with a framework for viewing the complex interactions that began to occur between Harry and the members of the psychiatric nursing staff and a direction for action.

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OPEN SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

The goal attainment theory of Imogene King is derived from an open systems framework and is based on three dynamic interacting systems: the personal system, the interpersonal system, and the social system. King (1981) summarized this systems framework.

Individuals comprise one type of system in the environment, called personal systems. Individuals interact to form dyads, triads, and small and large groups, which comprise another type of system, called interpersonal systems. Groups with special interest and needs form organizations, which make up communities and societies and are called social systems.

Each of the three interacting systems contains abstract concepts that relate and influence each other. The interrelated concepts, according to King, "explain facets of human behavior and also provide the nurse with increased knowledge of human beings and their environment and some of the critical variables that influence behavior" (King, 1981, p. 141).

EVALUATING PERSONAL SYSTEMS

According to King's theory, individuals comprise one type of system called a personal system.