Module D: Application of the Nursing Process in Caring for Patients with Common Health Problems of the Lower Gastrointestinal System

1. Statement of Purpose

   The lower gastrointestinal system (small intestine, large intestine, rectum) provides for absorption of fluids and outlet for solid wastes. Disruptions of the system occur across the lifespan and can be manifested by alterations in bowel elimination such as diarrhea and fluid loss or intestinal obstruction. The majority of common health problems occur in adulthood but the infant and the older adult are particularly vulnerable to the effects of fluid loss. The purpose of this module is to acquaint the nurse with the assessment skills necessary for determining actual or potential nursing problems of bowel elimination and provide information necessary to plan for health promotion, maintenance, or restoration; and to implement and evaluate appropriate nursing care.

2. Terminology

   Anus                           Ulcerative Colitis
   Barium Enema                   Diverticulosis
   Cecum                          Diverticulitis
   Colon                          Peritonitis
   Colonoscopy                    Appendicitis
   Constipation                   Salmonellosis
   Defecation                     Diarrhea
   Duodenum                       Dysentary
   Enteritis                      Impaction
   Ileum                          Ascites
   Jejunum                        
   Melena                         
   Occult Blood                   
   Proctoscopy                    
   Rectum                        
   Sigmoidoscopy                  
   Ostomy                        
   Cecostomy                     
   Colostomy                     
   Double-barrel Ostomy          
   End Ostomy                    
   Ileostomy                     
   Intussusception                
   Paralytic Ileus                
   Imperforate Anus              
   Hirschsprung's Disease
3. **Classroom Objectives**

3.1

a. Discuss the common health problems of the infant and child with lower G.I. dysfunction.
b. Explain the various diagnostic tests and treatment modalities common to lower G.I. dysfunction in the infant and child.
c. Identify the various common health problems of the young adult with lower G.I. dysfunction. Focus especially on the medical and surgical interventions used in treatment of ulcerative colitis.
d. Describe the common health problems of the adult with lower G.I. dysfunction. Include: cancers and their diagnosis/treatment; diverticulosis/diverticulitis with treatment and tests/treatment of hemorrhoids.
e. Identify the various common health problems that occur across the lifespan.
f. Differentiate between those common health problems that are infectious and those that are not.
g. Explain the various forms of intestinal obstruction.
h. Discuss the treatment modalities for patients with lower G.I. dysfunction. Include: nutrition, surgical intervention, pharmacologic agents and nursing interventions.
i. Explain the various common diagnostic tests used in assessment of lower G.I. dysfunction.

3.2 **Learning Activities**

a. Review anatomy and physiology of lower G.I. system.
b. Know terminology.
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c. Prepare a teaching plan for a patient with lower G.I. dysfunction. Include: nutrition, medical treatment, medications.
d. Complete a nursing care plan for pediatric and adult patients having a medical or surgical dysfunction of the lower gastrointestinal tract.
e. Review assigned computer programs, A-V materials and journal articles.

*** Not required of the VN student.

3.3 **References**

a. Anatomy and Physiology text.
e. Laboratory Tests & Diagnostic Procedures: Student
4. **Clinical Objectives**
   
a. Provide nursing care for patients with a variety of lower G.I. system conditions.

b. Assist in the preparation of patients for diagnostic procedures.

*** c. Administer medications to patients with lower G.I. system problems (oral - parenteral).

d. Complete a nursing care plan on a patient with a dysfunction of the lower G.I. system.

e. Administer nutrition by alternative means as possible.

f. Obtain specimens as relevant to the patient's condition.

g. Demonstrate knowledge of infection control principles for the protection of the patient, self and others.

*** The VN student is not responsible for I.V. medications.

5. **Skills Laboratory Requirements**

   a. Review:
      1) Collecting Stool Specimens
      2) Inserting Rectal Tubes
      3) Enemas

*** b. Care of intestinal decompression tubes post insertion.

c. Establishing Regular Bowel Evacuation

**References**

   *Current assigned text*

*** Not a requirement for the VN student.