

Interpersonal Relationship

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Interpersonal relationship is defined as "a process of developing trustworthy relationship that involves the interaction between two or more people."

- E. M. Varcarolis

The interpersonal relationship is the basis of nursing practice. In the health field, the helpful relationship is often referred to as a therapeutic relationship because it is a key element enabling health professionals to administer care to the patient.

Nursing is one of the professions where nurses while performing this job help other people to promote and maintain their optimal health, to prevent them from becoming ill, to restore their health following an episode of illness, or to cope with the emergencies of a chronic or terminal illness.

Social and Professional Relationship

Every human being has to lead his or her life in a society. Therefore, everyone should develop good interpersonal relationship to ensure a meaningful and enjoyable life. The interpersonal relationship of any person can be classified into two categories, namely social and professional interper-

sonal relationship. Social interpersonal relationship is concerned with relationship between the person and his or her friends and relatives whereas professional relationship is between the person and the various other persons who are all directly or indirectly connected with the particular profession.

The main differences between the social and professional relationships have been shown in the table below:

Nurse - Nursing students
Nurse - Nursing assistants
Nurse - Other health care professionals

In all these relationships, none can be treated as pure professional relationship. Instead each one has a suitable blend of social and professional components.

Elements of Interpersonal Relationship

The important elements for

SOCIAL	PROFESSIONAL
♦ Aim is pleasure and enjoyment for both the parties	♦ Aim is satisfying needs of the client e.g. providing health care to the patient
♦ Not necessarily goal-directed	♦ Goal-oriented
♦ Spontaneous interaction	♦ Planned and purposeful interaction
♦ Not time limited	♦ Limited in time
♦ No obligation to problem solving	♦ Obligation to problem solving

In nursing profession the following relationship are considered to be significant

Nurse - Patient
Nurse - Patient's family
Nurse - Physician
Nurse - Administrator
Nurse - Supervisor
Nurse - Educators
Nurse - Nurse

maintaining good interpersonal relationship are as follows:

- ☐ Rapport
- ☐ Trust
- ☐ Caring
- ☐ Respect
- ☐ Genuineness
- ☐ Empathy

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Rapport - Establishing rapport is the primary task in development of relationship. Rapport implies special feelings on part of both the parties e.g. nurse - nurse relationship based on mutual acceptance.

Trust - To trust another, one must feel confidence in that person. Trust is the initial need. Trustworthiness is demonstrated through nursing interventions that direct towards activities that address the patient's basic needs for physiological and psychological safety and security.

Examples of nursing interventions include:

- ◆ Providing a blanket when patient is feeling cold.
- ◆ Providing food when the patient is hungry.
- ◆ Being honest e.g. telling truth.
- ◆ Providing simple and clear explanations about his/her disease condition.
- ◆ Taking the patient's preferences, requests and opinions into consideration while taking decisions concerning his or her care.
- ◆ Ensuring confidentiality and providing reassurance.

Caring - Caring attitude is the most important requirement to build up interpersonal relationship between nurse and patient.

Respect - To show respect is to believe in the dignity and worth of an individual e.g. giving respect to superior or to patient.

The nurse can convey an attitude of respect to patient by

- ◆ Calling the patient by name with suitable title (not by the bed number).

- ◆ Spending sufficient time with the patient.
- ◆ Allowing for sufficient time to answer the patient's questions.
- ◆ Promoting an atmosphere of privacy during therapeutic interactions with the patient.

Genuineness - The concept of genuineness refers to the nurse's ability to be open, honest and 'real' in interactions with the patient. When the nurse uses self disclosure, the patient may feel more comfortable revealing personal information to the nurse.

Acceptance of others' values, beliefs and lifestyles is important in nurse-patient relationship.

Empathy - Empathy is the most important characteristic of the interpersonal relationship and it is a process in which the individual is able to sense accurately another's inner experience.

Accurate empathetic perceptions on the part of the nurse assist the patient to identify feelings and promote the positive self concept. With empathy, while understanding the patient's thoughts and feelings, the nurse is able to maintain sufficient objectivity in problem resolution with minimal assistance.

Essential Components

The three essential components of interpersonal relationship are as follows:

- Social relationship

- Intimate relationship
- Therapeutic relationship

Social Relationship is defined as a relationship that is primarily initiated for the purpose of friendship and socialisation. Mutual needs are met during social interaction e.g. participants sharing ideas, feelings and experience e.g. Nurse - nurse, Nurse - physician, Nurse - nursing assistants. Communication skills are used in this type of relationship to educate and to meet basic dependency needs.

Intimate Relationship occurs between two individuals who have an emotional commitment to each other and react naturally. Within the relationship the intimate desires are shared, mutual needs, growth and satisfaction are met. e.g. Nurse - nurse relationship.

Therapeutic Relationship between nurse and patient differs from both the social and intimate relationship in that the nurse maximises inner communication skills, understanding of human behaviour, and own personal strength in order to consistently focus on the patient's problems and needs.

Phases of Therapeutic Nurse - Patient Relationship

The therapeutic interpersonal relationship is the means by which problems are identified and resolutions are sought.

Tasks of the relationship have been categorised into four phases which are as follows:

- ◆ Pre-interaction phase
- ◆ Orientation or introductory phase

- ♦ Working phase
- ♦ Termination phase

Nurse's tasks in each phase of relationship process are as follows.

Pre-interaction

- ♦ Obtaining available information about the patient from charts and other health team members.
- ♦ Initial assessment of patient.
- ♦ Examine feelings, fears and anxieties of the particular patient.
- ♦ Plan first meeting with the patient.

Orientation

- ♦ Establishment of trust and rapport.
- ♦ Maintaining privacy.
- ♦ Gathering essential information from the patient or relatives.
- ♦ Identify patient's strengths and limitations.
- ♦ Formulate nursing diagnosis.
- ♦ Mutual goal setting with the consultation of patient.
- ♦ Developing a plan of action to meet the established goals.

Working phase

- ♦ Maintaining the trust and rapport that was established during the orientation phase.
- ♦ Promote the patient's insight and perception of reality.
- ♦ Problem solving approach.
- ♦ Continuous evaluation of progress towards the goal attainment.

Termination

Termination may occur for a variety of reasons which are as follows:

- a) The mutually agreed goals may have been reached or
- b) Patient may be discharged from the hospital or
- c) In the case of student nurse it may be the end of clinical rotation.

This is a difficult phase for both the patient and nurse.

In order to bring therapeutic relationship to a conclusion and ensure therapeutic closure, the nurse must establish the reality of separation and resist being manipulated into repeated delays by the patient.

Conclusion

In developing the interpersonal relationship, the important elements like rapport, respect, trust, caring, genuineness and empathy are the personal strengths in helping a person. The three essential components, namely social relationship, intimate relationship and therapeutic relationship are to be suitably interlinked with the four phases of therapeutic relationship for promoting the interpersonal relationship between nurse and patient.

The "therapeutic use of self" means using one's personality and interpersonal skills effectively while implementing the nursing process to help patients improve their health status. Communication is the core of all relationships through

which desired change is effected in others. Acceptance of others' values, beliefs, and lifestyles is important in nurse – patient relationship.

Nurses must be sensitive to socio-cultural factors such as religion, gender, and educational status that can affect interpersonal relationship and collaboration. In addition to communicating well with patients, nurses use interpersonal skills to collaborate effectively with physicians, nursing administrator, nursing supervisor, other nurses, staff and other members of health care delivery team.

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