Ensuring efficient nursing care is easy when adequate resources are available in the form of Man, Money and Materials. But it becomes a challenging task, as the resources become scarce. In the Indian scenario, many nurses face this challenge of providing effective nursing care in situations, of moderate and often acute shortage of these resources. These inadequacies are seriously hindering the quality and effectiveness of nursing care in our country. This is also true in the case of the undeveloped and many of the developing countries. Hence, simple ways to improve nursing care with available resources should receive utmost recognition, and become an important agenda of the professional nurses. So let us think of the possible ways to improve the nursing care and provide quality despite shortage of resources.

**Terminology**

**Communication:** Refers to the act of imparting or transmitting, interchange of thoughts or opinions; a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols (language, signs or gestures).

**Prioritisation:** Arranging the list of assignments to be accomplished within the target priority-wise.

**Delegation:** It is the process of assigning the specific responsibilities to the specific individuals.

**Quality Health care:** Appropriate application of medical and nursing knowledge to patient care while balancing the hazards associated with each intervention with the health benefits resulting from intervention.

**Material Management:** It refers to planning, organising and controlling aspects involved in ensuring availability of necessary materials, supplies, drugs and equipment as and when required.

**Management of Manpower:** Capacity of getting the best from the people.

**Effectiveness:** Doing right things; the extent to which outcomes are attained / result-oriented. It is the human side of performance.

**Efficiency:** Cost benefit ratio / relationship between monetary value of resources used and monetary value of results achieved; it is doing things rightly. It is the technical side of performance.

**Efficient Time Management**

One of the most important work resources of an individual is one’s time. Most often, people complain that there is no time. While everyone has the same amount of time people differ significantly managing this critical commodity. To manage time well, a head nurse must be familiar with all the activities of the ward. Some activities occur daily, some weekly and some under special circumstances. Those that occur regularly can be planned and managed intelligently.

**Initiating with good management:** Each day’s duty should be planned and proper assignments should be made. The staff member should be encouraged to read and plan their duties for next day before leaving the ward. Good management is greatly facilitated by starting every shift work promptly. Every nurse should be expected to be at the ward at the hour assigned. Casualness in this matter on the part of the ward charge nurse is likely to influence the members of the staff to arrive late. It is helpful to make a plan for the shift activities in the morning, so that they can be checked off as they are completed.

**Reducing interruptions:** Since time is wasted in going from one activity to another, good management requires avoidance of interruption as far as possible. Changes in the assignments of patients and time should be kept to a minimum though it is impossible to avoid them altogether for new patients are admitted and emergencies arise. The head nurse should learn to delegate responsibility to the team effectively so that she herself can do some of her work without too many interruptions.

**Establishment of ward routine:** Ward management is facilitated by systematic procedures for dealing with the details of administration. By adoption of a system for accomplishing routine day-to-day task, the head nurse frees herself for more constructive activities. Routine provides a plan for getting the work done in most competent way. Often establishment of ward routine helps in saving time for the nursing personnel.

**Communicating effectively:** Management involves getting things done through others. Few studies have attempted to explain how and why communication activities influence nurses job satisfaction and job performance. One study demonstrated that nurses...
who perceive their communication with other organisational members positively will be more satisfied with their work, co-workers and superiors and perform their job more effectively. Time will be saved and greater accuracy will result if ward routines are outlined in detail and placed in a ward policy.

Orientation plan: Orienting new personnel to the ward is essential for performance of the unit. No ward can function smoothly unless the personnel is acquainted with the situation in which he/she is required to work. New staff members must be familiarised with the general policies of the institution. The routines of the department and ward, the individuals with whom they will be working and their relationships with concerned persons will need to be explained well in the orientation program.

Prioritisation: People who have trouble in managing their time effectively often lack a clear understanding their priorities. Prepare a list of assignments at the start of the month, week and day. Then arrange them in order of priorities, and monitor it, delete the assignment accomplished and rearrange the list again.

Prompt decision making: The job of a nurse manager involves making decisions and taking action. Indecisiveness can severely limit a nurse’s effectiveness and can cripple her ability to accomplish all required tasks efficiently.

Smooth inventory: The head nurse ensures that all the equipment in the ward is working properly. Failure of the equipment can result in the waste of a lot of time for the nurses, as they have to either get them repaired or look for alternate solutions. Periodic short-cut of the equipment, instruments and other articles, which are out of order, is required for condemnation and putting a requisition ahead of time for the new one or replacement.

Understanding the Process of Delegation: Delegation is the process of assigning responsibilities and authority to a co-worker. Head nurse must understand the tri-polar process of delegation. A manager who does not delegate responsibilities and attempts to do everything themselves, including the unimportant tasks, fail to finish even the important ones satisfactorily.

Avoid obsession for perfection: Some people are obsessed with doing things perfectly and spend their time in giving minute attention to every small task. As a result they fail to carry out many other essential tasks. They also fail to delegate responsibilities,

Time management: This can be done by discouraging drop-in visitors and non-job related conversations. Drop-in visitors are unavoidable in normal hospital environments. They may be either internal or external. A head nurse should learn how to cope with such visitors with the minimal loss of time. Further, tea/coffee breaks, if not controlled properly, can be a major cause of wastage in productive time available. It is important that proper time schedules are made for tea/coffee breaks and the schedule is adhered to strictly. Make sure that each staff members are aware of their schedules of time limit.

Ability to say no when required: Ward manager must possess the traits of effective leadership re-flexibility, and never try to avoid responsibility. Not everyone knows the art of saying no though one wants to. A head nurse needs to learn that well to manage the team. It is also essential to manage the high work demands she is facing.

Material Management

Material is defined as equipment, apparatus and supplies used by an organisation. Approximately 42 percent of all the hospital budget is spent on supplies and equipments; two-third of that is spent on medically oriented supplies, for which usage patterns are influenced significantly by nursing.

One of the reasons for inadequate resources in the ward is misuse of supplies. Common examples are:

> Opening - dressing set for forceps, delivery kits for needles holder, suture kits for scissors, cut down set for thumb forceps, etc.
> Using spirit to make fire for making tea.
> Misuse of hospital forms for scratch paper and report writing.
> Using leucoplast for fixing files, chart paper, poster, bed number, etc.

Causes of Misuse of Supplies for Equipment

- Lack of in-service education for on-going staff development.
- Lack of recognition and awareness of problem and its magnitude on the part of hospital administrators.
- Inability to keep the equipments in good working condition.
- Lack of knowledge about cost of supplies.
- Lack of positive attitude towards efficient use of supplies. Many nurses think that providing top
quality care is only their responsibility, no matter how much supplies are wasted.

- Poor planning of procedures.
- Laziness.

**Effective Material Management**

The materials management process in the ward should be well designed to ensure that the process is effective in handling the day-to-day requirements of the ward without loss of time, money and material. Other areas are: ensuring adequate flow of supplies, equipments, drugs, and solutions; maintaining emergency and buffer stocks; and delegating a responsible person in the ward to handle supplies and equipments. In a busy ward, the head nurse cannot carry responsibilities for all details of ward management. Therefore, some aspects of management, such as managing supplies and equipments, etc., can be entrusted to some other person in the ward. A non-nurse assistant could relieve the head nurse from the entire responsibility in this area like keeping the shelf stocked, keeping the treatment room in order.

It is necessary that the head nurse knows the needs of the ward so that excessive use of supplies can be detected. For example, linen is wasted when there is failure to protect the bed adequately by rubber mats. Rubber goods become hardened and crack if placed on or near a hot radiator.

Nurses need to be educated in economical use of hospital property. It is the duty of the head nurse to impress on every member of the ward staff the need for economy in the use of supplies and the proper use of and care of equipments. She can do this work by instructing in the process of breakage and deterioration as well as proper usage of equipments; arranging orientation conferences for new interns and nursing students about care of the equipments and economical use of supplies; using illustrative material and bulletin boards to emphasise the cost of equipments and the need for its careful handling. A simple writing of price tag on the items can prevent careless usage.

All the equipment in the ward should be brought under proper preventive management contracts so that it is in proper running condition. This can be done either through the hospital administration or from the equipment vendors directly as per prevalent hospital policy. Nurses should also arrange and assist in audit of materials; participate in policy making of material management, as also in tender/procurement sub-committees. She / he should evaluate the efficacy of the material management system followed in the unit.

**Management of Manpower**

Human resources are the most important assets of any organisation. Power management of personnel is important for providing quality nursing care. The following categories of manpower resources are available in the ward normally: (i) Qualified nursing professionals (ii) doctors (iii) nursing students (iv) nursing aides (v) class IV employees; and (vi) patients.

The success of the head nurse depends on effectively managing these human resources and getting the best output from them as per requirements in the ward. This is normally achieved by: (a) Devising an efficient patient assignment system: Depending upon the number of patients, number of qualified nursing personnel, and number of nursing aides and the seriousness of the patients any type of assignment system can be followed; (b) Utilising nursing aides for care requiring less technical competency; (c) Delegating responsibility to nursing aides and non-nursing personnel; (d) Setting standards for quality care; (e) Maintaining a conducive physical and psychological environment for efficient work; (f) Building positive morale; (g) Participative management; (h) Good communication and Good supervision; (i) In-service education and (j) Performance appraisal.

**Other Measures for Effective In-patient Care**

1. Reduce the length of hospital stay: This can be achieved by motivating the patient for recovery, efficient scheduling and preventing complications.
2. Documenting the care: Proper documentation will ensure prevention of duplication or lapses.
3. Measuring effectiveness of care: Health care effectiveness is usually defined in term of the benefits received through the measures adopted to improve the outcomes of health care services and policies. They include: (i) Health status indicators, (ii) Consumer satisfaction, (iii) Assessment of clients knowledge and satisfaction, (iv) Self care action ability, (v) Cure / arrest of disease, and (vi) Prevention of complications.

**Conclusion**

Provision of quality care to the patients in hospital within the available resources is a challenge before the nurse administrator of the day. It is important for her to know the ways and means to improve and improve the nursing care of the patients during their stay in the hospital. She needs to be good in the management of money, man, material and time. The success in achieving the organisational goals depends not only on the hard work of nurse manager, but on her professional knowledge of hospital administration.