

Role of a Nurse in Stoma Care

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Ostomy surgery has now progressed to a specialised field, not only in surgery but also in the care of the ostomy patient. The nurse specializing in stoma care should be a qualified nurse who has had practical and administrative experience as ward sister, and preferably has attended a management course. It is important that she attends a recognized course in stoma care.

The primary goal of the ostomy nurse is to enable patients to leave the hospital with mental and physical confidence in their ability to deal with the changes in body function. The ostomy nurse has truly opened the door to better ostomy care, which offers the patient an opportunity to live and not merely exist.

The ostomy nurse has five major functions; (i) to assess ostomy patient's needs and ensure that they have continuity of good care; (ii) to institute patient teaching; (iii) to establish an understanding with the Nursing staff and to aid them in formulating nursing care plans; (iv) to maintain an adequate recording system; (v) to provide an extension of the Nurses' knowledge through educational programmes.

The average patient is frightened and will not easily accept the idea of stoma surgery. The Nurse will therefore, have to establish certain principles for effective care. There must be good communication from Nurse to patient and from patient to Nurse. The patient and his family must develop trust in the Nurse. Where she cannot help directly, she will find a source of help for them, and each patient must believe that they can learn to manage their own stoma care and return to normal life.

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The establishment of good working relationship with patient and his family, will help to tackle the goals for rehabilitation. The patient should be able to change his appliance satisfactorily without any help, and have confidence that he can change it anywhere. He must be able to recognize and adopt to changes of stoma pattern, and have a knowledge of a normal diet and be aware of problem foods. He needs to know of the appropriate sources of help in hospital and the community and how to contact them and be able to look after and maintain his stoma care supplies. He needs confidence that having a stoma will not stop him from returning to work or any hobbies he previously enjoyed. While being aware that having a stoma restricts some activities, he must refuse to allow himself or any other persons to treat him as a second class citizen.

The new patient with a stoma will have to build up a relationship with the stoma care nurse and will expect to see it maintained after he leaves hospital. Therefore the patient should be seen by the stoma care nurse at his first surgical outpatient visit post-operatively. He should also know how to book in for the stoma care clinic at the hospital and the family should know how to contact the stoma care nurse if the patient is having problems. Nurses responsible for stoma care in hospital or in the community have a number of other functions to fulfil, including education, research and providing information. They have to educate stoma patients' relatives in basic stoma care, dietary needs, source of appliance supplies, etc. give instruction to ward nurses on practical aspects of stoma care, give lectures on stoma care and appliance to nurse in their own and other hospitals and community centres. This ensures that the

role of the stoma care nurse is understood by all the people who may be concerned.

In her work the stoma care nurse has to keep in touch with many other people also concerned with the patient; with the ward sister, to minimize the disruption of the daily routine and work load, when nurses are having practical demonstrations in stoma care in the wards and departments; with ward nurses, who are overseeing the daily stoma care of their patients and who are working with the stoma care nurse in the teaching programme of each patient; with the medical staff, on pre and post operative problems or questions raised by individual patients; with the appliance staff, on supplies, quantities and types of appliances to be stocked, etc, and with the medical social worker, dietitian, physiotherapist, occupational therapist and pharmacy department.

The stoma care nurse should have an easy access to a library of relevant books and articles, and records of places where ostomists can get help.

The primary aim must always be to return stoma patients to the same place in society he held before surgery and to rehabilitate him satisfactorily to the point where he feels able to take charge of his own destiny.

The knowledge that there is a nurse, with specialized training, who will be taking a close interest in their problems both emotional and practical, seems to give these patients a considerable physiological boost at a time when they are in need to support.

References :

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