

The Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes Required for the Nurse to Render Patient-centred Nursing Care

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IN the past nursing education emphasised the development of procedural skills and the understanding of the manifestation resulting from disease or trauma.

Modern nursing educational programmes however stress meeting the totality of the patient's needs. During the past few decades there has developed the concept of 'Comprehensive nursing care' and 'Patient centred nursing care'. The aim of these concepts has been to raise nursing practice to a professional level. These concepts have also given impetus to a movement directed toward the development of the body of knowledge upon which nursing practice is based. It is upon such a scientific basis that the nurse may best meet the needs of the patients.

In an article by Bratton, 'Comprehensive Nursing Care' is defined as :

...that process which provides for the nursing needs of the individual, including physical, emotional, spiritual, economic, social and rehabilitative needs. These are ascertained by contact with the patient and his family through communication with those persons who can best acquaint the nurse with certain aspects of the medical plan of care.

This care includes ministrations to the patient of those therapeutic and comfort measures that contribute to a sense of well-being and serve as a basis for cure; those medications and treatments that the physician has prescribed and those comforts which the nurse institutes;

these are administered with skill, dispatch and discriminative judgement.¹

Comprehensive nursing care implies considering the patient as an individual with an understanding of his physical and social background, his personality and his problems. He is also looked upon as a member of a family, a member of a society as well as an individual personality. That means the plan of care is centred on the individual patient and his needs.

Patient needs determine patient care. The common needs of a person can be considered in five broad categories. They are the physiological, safety, psychological, social and spiritual needs. These needs are listed in more detail by Inice Chirco³ :

1. Oxygen to all body cells.
2. Nutrition to all body cells.
3. Proper elimination.
4. Fluid and electrolyte balance.
5. Recognition of disease process.
6. Maintenance of sensory functions.
7. Recognition of emotions and relation to disease.
8. Communications.
9. Identify and accept negative feelings and reactions.
10. Establish good interpersonal relationships.
11. Satisfaction of personal and spiritual goals.
12. Accept limitations.
13. Use of community resources.

14. Recognise social problems in case of illness.

15. Good hygiene and physical comfort.

16. Exercise, rest and sleep.

17. Prevention of illness and injury.

18. Good body posture.

The nurse who takes care of the patient must be able to assess the needs of the patient and identify all the needs for which he requires assistance. From the information collected a nursing diagnosis can be established.

The nursing diagnosis is a determination of the nature and extent of nursing problems or needs presented by individual patients or families receiving nursing care. Thus the making of a nursing diagnosis is an independent function of the professional nurse.

To collect the data required to make a nursing diagnosis, it is essential that a nurse must have knowledge and skill in the observation of signs and symptoms and the proper interpretations. After the collection of the data they should be analysed and problems can be met through the practice of nursing. Problems which belong to other discipline should be referred to the appropriate persons. From this it is evident that the nurse is a co-ordinator in the medical team and she should have good interpersonal relationship with all the other members of the medical team.

The nursing diagnosis serves as a basis for the formulation of a nursing care plan that is directed

toward the accomplishment of the immediate and long term goals. Regular re-evaluation of the plan is essential to give continued nursing care, as the needs of the patient are changing.

A nurse who possesses the required knowledge, skill and discriminative judgement should be able to identify and meet the needs of the patient effectively.

In modern times the professional nurse is especially educated and trained not only to identify the needs of the patients but also to consider which of these needs take priority. It is true that the patient presents manifold problems or needs, but the intensity of need varies in each patient and in the same patient from time to time, depending upon the conditions and stresses to which he is exposed. Identifying the priority of the patient's needs means ranking those needs in the order of their importance in requiring attention. For

example, a patient who has been burned and is in shock requires alleviation of shock prior to ministering to his other needs. The patient whose airway is blocked requires relief of the obstruction above all else. The patient who is making the decision to have or not to have a laryngectomy may require a sympathetic listener above all else.

One of the main attitudes a nurse should essentially acquire is respect to every person as an individual human being with dignity and rights. Every person likes to maintain his dignity and rights whatever is his status in life, his religion, colour, national origin, economic status, age, state of health or personal habits. There are many ways to manifest true respect for the dignity and rights of the individual. Each patient must be treated with kindness, thoughtfulness and courtesy.

A nurse should accept that the

patient has needs, physiological, psychological, social, intellectual and spiritual. She must render care to people without expecting any reward from them and she is expected to give care because the person needs it rather than for selfish motives.

Thus in order to render patient-centred nursing care, the individual patient's needs must be assessed, priority needs identified and care given effectively, for which it is essential that the nurse must acquire the needed skill, knowledge and right attitude.

REFERENCES

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2. Inice Chirco, *The Patient-centred approach to Nursing* (Brewster Publications 1963) p. 41.
3. Abdellak, Martin, Beland, Matheney, *Patient-centred approaches to nursing* (The Macmillan Co. 1960).
4. Irene L. Beland, *Clinical Nursing* (Macmillan Co. 1965).

An Address—Contd. from page 173

students. This can be improved mainly through better staffing pattern and adequate supply to meet the increasing demands for health services and hospitalisation. Learning principles for nursing care will help towards dealing with all situations.

It is hoped that the problem solving methods which you practised would contribute for improving the nursing care of patients. Let us help our patients in all aspects by stressing on priorities, and by utilising the available resources. I am sure that your learning of this method as well as the study of psychology will help you in getting the maximum work through proper methods of personnel management.

The changing role of a nurse specially with increased number of members on the health team and the changing techniques due to rapid advances in medical science are the areas a nurse has to keep constant watch of. A study like

yours have given ample opportunities for such observation and I am sure that you have developed a habit of going through literatures and observe medical practice which has a direct influence on nursing and thus improve day to day practice of nursing. As educators, nurses have a great responsibility in this regard, so that necessary changes are brought in to teach the student nurses in order to meet the changing role. One of the latest contribution the Indian Nursing Council made in this connection is that in order to impart knowledge in family planning, changes and additions were made in the syllabi of General Nursing, Health Visitor and Auxiliary Nurse-midwife. Therefore, besides keeping up with advances in medical sciences, nurses should keep up with the development of health services in the States and in the country as a whole so that student nurses on completion of their studies can function

effectively for the health services.

You have been prepared for leadership. Remember that a leader should have first hand knowledge of the area of work he/she is going to lead besides other leadership qualities. A leader of nursing must possess depth and understanding of the field of nursing and mastery of the technical content commensurate with their responsibilities in key posts. For a nurse, leadership begins with the care of one patient to the management of a ward/department/institution. Team spirit and leadership are two significant areas for giving health services. I am sure that you will display both these qualities with the background knowledge you gained from this school for your future work and for the cause of human welfare.

I wish you all success in your future work and may God bless you in your ventures.