

How to Ensure Good Patient Care Inspite of Shortage of Nursing Personnel

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THE modern community expect a very high standard of health service, since science has made continuous advancement. At the same time the conditions of Nursing Service are inadequate to attract and hold the necessary number and quality of personnel.

This has brought about a crisis on the nursing profession in most of the countries.

The shortage of personnel enforces devices for more efficient use of existing staff. Outstanding among those are the administrative arrangement, division of labour and redistribution of task, the adaptation of direction and supervision, and the creation of teams--rationally mixing professional and non-professional workers.

To ensure good patient care, the following aspects have to be taken into consideration :

1. Good Ward planning and management.
2. Procurement of maximum service out of each member of the team both in quality and quantity.
3. Guarantee of freedom to nurses from non-nursing functions.
4. Healthy collaboration with other departments.
5. Physical set up of the units and facilities.
6. Teaching patients and relatives.
7. Making nursing profession more attractive.

Planning

The objective of the plan is to give the highest possible quality of

nursing care, with the patient as the central figure. It should be effective, efficient and economic. A plan is required to provide for the effective distribution and best use of nursing skills and services. It is a continuous process. It should be simple, intelligible and flexible. Plans are long range and short range according to the necessity. Long range plan is foresighted and short range plan is for immediate action.

Head Nurse (Ward Sister)- This member of the Nursing team has a great role to play. She must have the qualities of a good leader, administrator, teacher, and a good bedside nurse. She has to see that she plans her ward in such a way that every patient receives the best possible care with the existing number of personnel.

She must be able to assign jobs according to individual capabilities, experience and patients needs.

To enable her to perform her duties satisfactorily, it is essential for her to participate in post-basic training and in-service education. She must be democratic and be able to appreciate good work in order to encourage each member of her team.

In order to get the maximum service from each member of the team, and free her from non-nursing functions the following must be kept in mind :

Improvement of working conditions, conserving nurses' energy for professional functions by doing job analysis and making best use of non-professional personnel such as :

1. Nursing Aids to assist nurses in their work
2. Porters and messengers to see to the transportation of patients, and to carry messages to different departments.
3. Secretaries to help with clerical work
4. Dietitians to see to the food arrangement of the patients.

Departmental sisters are of great help for overall planning and co-ordination of different categories of workers. Each individual should feel that she is a member of the team by giving her the opportunity to express her ideas. The enthusiasm can be encouraged by :

1. Increasing delegation of authority
2. Inspiring the importance of her responsibility for progress.
3. Assisting the individual worker according to her own personality into the job, using the desirable concept of management.
4. Promoting good morale among the personnel.

Better use of technical equipment and supplies, provision for the use of disposable materials to avoid extra work in sterilization, disinfection, cleaning etc. are also necessary to promote efficiency.

The provision for Central Supply System is most valuable to free the nurses from keeping charge of various stocks and preparing things for procedures as this will enable her to give better patient care

Arrangement to have telephones in all Sister's office and different departments will save time.

Collaboration with other Departments.

This is one of the factors which helps the nurse to give better nursing care. Each department should feel its importance in contributing towards the care of the patients. Nursing is closely associated with medical profession. It needs constant support and understanding of the medical personnel. The co-operation and mutual understanding between the nursing and medical personnel will go a long way in the achievement of common goals of a hospital viz: curative care to the sick and disabled, prevention of diseases and maintenance of health, education and training of the workers and research etc. It is through the spirit of co-operation and co-ordination of these two groups, good patient care can be performed. To establish this relationship, periodical meetings and conferences of Nursing Service Personnel, Medical Personnel and other departmental staff should be encouraged.

Physical set up and Working Facilities of the Units.

A nurse can have more time for her patients, if the hospital service unit is organised to relieve her of time consuming foot work. The plan and the set-up should be simple with the necessary equipment to give maximum service and education. The small units consisting of 2-6 beds provide more quietness and rest to the patients than was possible in the old fashioned open wards. The service room may be arranged parallel to the Ward unit for easy approach. The environment should be safe and comfortable for its workers, which promotes efficiency.

All the deleterious effect of noise should be avoided and all

articles kept in proper order with a view to ensuring their prompt availability.

Teaching of Patients and Relatives

The objective of this is to ensure:

1. Co-operation from the patient and his relatives during his stay in the hospital for:

- (a) Speedy recovery
- (b) Prevention of spread of infection
- (c) Prevention of complications
- (d) Rehabilitation

2. His Future plan:

- (a) to promote and maintain health
- (b) to prevent further complications.

On admission the patient should be given a good orientation either verbal or written. The patient must be explained of the treatment and medicines he is given in order to get his co-operation. The importance of carrying on with the treatment after leaving the hospital should be stressed. Formal and informal health teaching programmes may be arranged periodically.

Patients should always be reminded that "Prevention is better than cure."

How to Make Nursing Profession More Attractive

We are confronted with an acute problem of shortage of nursing personnel, which causes every nurse to feel that she is not doing enough for her patient. We need more people in the profession so that patient can be given the best possible care. Let us analyse some of the points which could cause a nurse to leave the profession: These may be:

Insecurity

Discontentment

Authoritarian principles.

The following steps may help to overcome the above mentioned points:

1. Improvement of the terms and conditions of service and salary
2. Extra payment for overtime, evening and night duty
3. Raising of morale for high standard of the profession
4. Encouragement to the workers by giving promotions or increments in salary, according to their experience and ability.
5. Improvement of living conditions in the nurses home.
6. Introduction of part time workers to retain married nurses in the profession.

To impress upon the community regarding the profession nurses should participate in social activities, give talks and also publish articles in lay press, participate in radio and television programmes etc. continuity of which should be kept up.

It is at any rate clear that while there is a pressure of shortage, the cultivation of more efficient methods of functions are necessary. The key to this is an understanding of the science of administration, which is nothing more mysterious than the adjustment of all resources to this purpose.

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