

Supervision of Nursing Service Personnel

By

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Supervision in the field of Nursing is a co-operative educational process which has as its objective the growth and development of staff and students, and the improvement of nursing service. It also means "higher or superior vision" or seeing beyond. In administrative supervision, the primary concern is to get a job well done. Therefore it involves inspection, guidance and evaluation of workmanship. If supervision is to be effective, it should include studying the situation to determine changes which would make it possible to do a better job; and to help the staff members to improve themselves. Supervision has to be of such a nature that it will help each individual to find satisfaction in whatever activity she may be engaged, and to feel a sense of responsibility for the success of the work as a whole. Leading and "not bossing", encouraging and "not scolding", inspiring and "not threatening", are the sounder ways to appeal to human nature. It is always better that people are governed by their desires rather than fears.

Planning for Supervision

The first step in planning for supervision is the setting of objectives sufficiently broad and flexible to allow for easy adjustment to changing situations. Then a survey should be made to understand the existing facilities, staff situation, equipment and supplies, number of the institution and the time factor. After analysing these facts, the best method suitable to each should be selected. While planning, the supervisor should always invite the suggestions from the group; explain her aims, and discuss through conferences, in-service education, refresher courses etc. ways and means to achieve them. The professional preparation of the staff determine whether a given plan will be feasible, or die shortly after its birth.

Take for example, staff education programmes conducted in two hospitals. One planned by the supervisor and staff together after realising its need, and making the group receptive of the same. The other, planned by the supervisor alone who felt its need and importance. However enthusiastic and competent the supervisor may be, the programme planned by her alone is apt to die of inanition whereas there is every possibility for the first programme to grow to its utmost usefulness. The same will be the result of all methods of supervision, if the group is not brought into its planning. It is important that the authority and responsibility of the supervisor is well defined. The supervisor should see that she delegates clearly defined duties to each staff member.

It is always better that due thought is given to possible difficulties which might impede a supervisory programme. Finally a plan should also be made to measure or evaluate the results of such a planned programme when put into practice.

The following few points should be specially kept in mind while planning a supervisory programme:

1. To achieve good results, the programme of supervision must be well planned.
2. Effective planning is dependent upon co-operative thinking as to aims and objectives, content of programme, determination of the needs in order of importance, allocation of duties and related factors.
3. Planning on a long term and short term basis ensures continuity and flexibility to the programme.
4. Planning in terms of reasonable accomplishment supercedes over inclusion of content. In the first instance, joy of accomplishment gives impetus to greater inclusions, in the latter instance discouragement may precipitate the

abandonment of the total programme.

Method of Supervision

In any supervisory programme the methods selected should be compatible with the objectives, which in the field of nursing are, broadly speaking, better care to patients and better education to staff and student nurses. The methods should also have provision for adjusting to the situation. In any method, delegation should be clear as to work responsibility and authority.

There are many methods which could be used in supervision. Since they are commonly used by us, I do not think they need any explanation as to what they mean and how effective they are in supervision:

1. Orientation.
2. Ward rounds.
3. Individual and group conferences.
4. Incidental and planned clinical teaching.
5. Counselling.
6. Assignments.
7. Discussion.
8. Praise and recognition.
9. Demonstration of desirable performances.
10. Staff education.
11. Answering and asking questions.
12. Giving examples and inviting positive suggestions.
13. Making opportunities for observations of unusual symptoms.
14. Research.
15. Evaluation programme.

Leadership Aspects of Supervision

Who supervises the nursing personnel? We all know that Matron, Departmental Sisters, Ward Sisters, Staff Nurses and even Student Nurses are supervising the duties of all those in their lower ranks. The supervisor is the leader of the group whom she supervises. Supervision is a co-operative process which demands the guidance of a leader. Leadership in this sense, is the activity of influencing people to co-operate towards some goal which they come to find desirable.

The function of a *Matron*, as a supervisor, is not a desk job. She interprets the administration and its philosophy, policies and practices to her staff. She interprets the needs and wishes of her

staff to the administration. She is a liaison officer between the administration and the staff interpreting each to the other, always keeping in view the betterment of service and the growth and development of her staff.

Departmental Sisters and Ward Sister, as supervisors have excellent opportunity to assist in the evaluation and revision of policies. They can quickly discover when policies are no longer practical or adequate in guiding the service, and may also be the first to point out to the matron any need for elaboration or inclusion of new policies for action. They facilitate co-ordination of services. Effective co-operation with all departments makes the nurses' work easy. They promote optimum performance by each staff member, providing every opportunity for their growth and development. They contribute to the maintenance of good personal relationships.

The *staff nurses* and *students* also carry out supervisory functions at a lower level which helps a great deal in keeping the routine of the ward running smoothly and safely.

Whatever be the designation or the position of a supervisor, she should possess certain abilities such as technical competence, ability to plan the work, co-operation in executing organisation policies, judgement and decision, acceptance of responsibility and also constructive and independent thinking.

She must have a readiness to analyse her own actions. For that, she should ask herself the following questions and see whether she gets a 'yes' answer to them.

1. Do I show a personal interest in helping my people to go ahead?
2. Do I have a clear cut understanding with each of my colleagues as to their individual opportunities for advancement?
3. Do I give my co-worker reason for confidence in my own impartiality and fairness?
4. Do I plan the work so that the staff know what is ahead of them?
5. Do I set a fair task and not expect unreasonable results?
6. Do I show constant interest in the safety and health of my staff?

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