Importance of communication in nursing

Communication in nursing

Introduction

Communication in nursing is vital to quality and safe nursing care (Judd, 2013). There is evidence that continues to show that breakdowns in communication can be responsible for many medication errors, unnecessary health care costs and inadequate care to the patient (Judd, 2013). Several reports exist from the Institute of Medicine that stress the importance of good communication and its link to providing safe and reliable care (Judd, 2013). (Smith & Pressman, 2010). However, even nurses with the best communication skills can be challenged by difficult situations such as life threatening threatening illness or injury, complicated family relationships, and mental health issues, to symptoms such as unrelieved pain and nausea. How a nurse may respond during these situations depends on many factors. Each nurse brings their own history, culture, experience, and personality to a situation. Communication in the workplace can either be horizontal among workers at the same hierarchical level, vertical among workers in different hierarchical levels or diagonal amongst different workers in different hierarchical levels. All these kinds of communication are crucial in the work environment because work needs to be done and goals need to be met. A communication channel is made up of three components made up of the sender of the message (encoder), the channel of sending the message and the receiver of the message (decoder) (Anderson, 2013). For effective communication to be achieved, the encoder and the decoder must be able to understand one another. This paper will discuss some strategies which could

be implemented to improve both written and verbal communication between nurses, health professionals and between patients and the health care team.

Communication, a fundamental aspect of nursing, is a complex, continual transactional process that occurs between persons by which information, feelings, and meaning are conveyed through verbal and non verbal messages (Peereboom, 2012). It is crucial for nurses to identify communication strategies that should be put into consideration every time they are involved in conversations involving their line of practice. This is because clear and accurate communication strategies enable them to identify effective patterns in their interactions and in teaching themselves to improve their patient education techniques. Handover communication between practitioners may at times seclude crucial information and is even prone to misinterpretation. Such communication breakups and challenges can lead to intense mishaps in the continuity of health care, incorrect treatment, and potential harm to the patient in general (Memoire, 2007).

Simple strategies can easily impart critical information just by eye sight. For instance, nurses are able to communicate critical patient status issues like allergies and fall risk with color-coded patient identification wrist bands or stickers on their medical records, a seat belt or flag attached to a wheel chair, or any other objects which are easily identifiable by all medical practitioners (Joint contribution resources, 2005). The use of local jargon can also be avoided when making professional conversations because some words may portray a meaning that was not intended or is not readily understood by a large number of people.

Assimilation of the ISBAR tool is a strategy that has been really helpful in enhancing communication in the healthcare sector when used. Identifying yourself (I), availability of the situation (S), background (B), assessment (A), and recommendations (R) facilitates communication allowing each health practitioner to receive and give important information in a format that satisfies numerous communication styles and needs (Dixon et al., 2006). This tool should be adopted by everyone to improve communication is because this technique utilizes the use of one common language for passing on critical information without leaving out anything.

Another strategy that can be used to improve communication in healthcare centers is the Crew Resource Management technique which is both a communication and team building technique (ECRI, 2009). This strategy trains members of the healthcare sector to assert themselves respectively and be attentive when they are being spoken to and also encourages them to make use of briefings. Briefings are direct communications between physicians, nurses or other caregivers acting on patient status which includes sharing of important information at critical times, such as before the start of a procedure, at the change of shift and during normal patient rounds (ECRI, 2009).

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PATIENTS AND THE HEALTH CARE TEAM

One stratergy that can be used to improve communication between patients and the health care team is the use of ' The World Health Organization Surgical Safety Checklist'. This checklist is to be used in operating suites to ensure everyone involved with the patient including the patient understands

what procedure they are having ad gives prompts to tick off so important information is not missed during handovers leading to reduced inpatient complications and death (Department of Health, 2010).

In addition to the patient, their family members or next of kin can also be included in the rounds further increasing the opportunity for direct dialogue which reduces the development of complications which arise as a result of miscommunication in the form of home care. It is important to note that if personal care by the family of the patient is not provided as requested by the medical practitioner, cohesive care is not accomplished and the opportunity to achieve patient care goals will not be met (O'Leary et al., 2010). Joint commission reports also indicate that health practitioners should also encourage patients to actively participate in their own care as a strategy to enhance communicational barriers (Stein, 2006). Successful interactions are always co-constructed, involving a constant interplay among the two parties. When the patient and the healthcare provider are comfortable with one another communicating becomes easy and more effective in the sense that the healthcare provider will be able to solve the needs of the patient.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES

Communication between medical practitioners can greatly influence the general patients care outcomes. Medical practitioners are in the frontline to investigate and identify communication challenges and try to implement solutions that fit their line of duty. Some further research is also being carried out to evaluate potential solutions and more successful options (Rosenstein, 2005).

Creating a collaborative relationship between nurses and other medical practitioners is also another strategy that can help reduce communicational barriers and thus improve the general treatment of patients (Arora, 2005). With regard to Schmalenberg and Kramer (2005), " MD/ RN collaboration is reflected in reduced patient mortality, fewer transfers back to the ICU, reduced costs, decreased length of stay in hospitals, higher nurse autonym, retention, nurse-perceived high quality care, and nurse job satisfaction". Larabee (2006) also found out that positive relationships between medical practitioners were a major contributing factor to improved nursing job satisfaction and retention. Positive collegial relationships therefore result from good communication, mutual acceptance and understanding, use of persuasion rather than coercion, and a balance of reason and emotion when working with others (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2009, pg. 7).

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN NURSES

A number of strategies have been set up to address communication issues among nurses. For instance, the implementation of unit based care teams places nurses and people like physicians close to one another thus increasing the chances of communicating effectively (Gordon et al, 2011). The introduction of compulsory bed rounds is also another strategy that has enabled nurses to reduce communication barriers and promote effective communication thus creating patient health satisfaction and general health care providers satisfaction in their duties.

The continuous flow of interruptions and multiple patient handoffs affect the ability of nurses and physicians to connect effectively, and establish a

trusting and collegial relationship (Tschannen et al., 2011). The fact that the working environment of nurses and other medical practitioners is rather different also induces a number of communication barriers with regard to the intensity of activities on a normal working day (Burns, 2011). this could be improv4d by…

Communication challenges are recognized when set goals or achievements are not met or when there is great employee turnover. Technological advances have opened up communication across boundaries of different countries meaning that people with different languages, behaviors and culture interact with one another (Krizan, 2010). In the health care sector in particular, the most pertinent communication barrier is the inability for colleagues to interact physically as they are separated in different departments (Vignam, 2013). This lack of interaction minimizes the ability for team members to collaborate wholly in the sense that the ability to analyze body language and create a sense of energy among team members is null. This can be improved by…

Barriers

Barriers to communication that exist are the use of machinery and equipment that might malfunction and deliver the message later than expected thus reducing the urgency of information. In addition to this, these machines are not able to express aspects of speech such as tone thus making them a true barrier to effective communication. Language is also a major communication barrier in the case where colleagues do not speak the same language or where they have difficulty in articulating clearly in one

common language. The use of local idioms, jargon and acronyms further complicates language and kills communication among team members who find certain words ambiguous (Lingard, 2005). A patient in a hospital setting usually sees more than one health care practitioner and specialist during their stay (Memoire, 2007). Handover communication between practitioners may at times seclude crucial information and is even prone to misinterpretation.

By improving communication among healthcare professionals the delivery of patient care improves and is saferStrong and effective nursing care is enriched and strengthened by good communication (2)

In Victoria, the direct cost of medical

errors in public hospitals is estimated at half a billion dollars annually [1]. Today, healthcare is

evermore complex and diverse, and improving communication among healthcare professionals

is likely to support the safe delivery of patient care.

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