

Editorial

The influence of effective nurse leaders on patient care outcomes

Nurses: A voice to lead – Health for All, the International Council of Nurses theme for Nurses Day (IND) 2019, a message to be lived for one day only, or a message to always be lived by all nurses. What does the message entail? “IND 2019 provides three important messages for nurse and policy makers:

- Nurses save lives and improve, protect and promote health and well-being.
- Nurses are a vital access point to 24/7, birth to death, emergency and ongoing care.
- Nurses are the foundation to high quality, affordable, accessible care”.¹

How can these three messages be changed into action? Nurse leaders who *walk the talk* are the most important in actioning this drive. To represent the voice of all in need of health care, nurse leaders must understand the impact they have on patient care and health outcomes.

Nurse leaders are the role models for top performing nurses and other healthcare workers; they set the trend for quality care and take the lead in being visible leaders in health care. The influence of nursing leadership on patient care outcomes has been proven scientifically and many studies that support the statement have been published.² Effective nurse leaders understand their role in ensuring that positive change takes place in their environment – all patients must benefit from the care rendered.

Is it at all possible to negate the public outcry following poor healthcare images on social media? It feels as if nurses are fighting a losing battle as we work relentlessly to provide excellent care to our patients. How is it possible after years of education and training to experience again and again situations where neglect and lack of care were evident in a healthcare facility? The question to be asked is where the leadership and management of the facility were – do we really function as effective nurse leaders? Are we so busy with administrative

chores that the most important aspect of management in a care facility, namely, *management by walking around*, is neglected?

Effective nurse leaders are aware of the care rendered in their facility and take responsibility and accountability for the manpower and resources applied to achieve optimal quality care and patient outcomes. “The successful operation of the shift, staff morale and managing difficult or challenging situations depends largely on the senior nurse’s leadership skills... Effective leaders are required to use problem-solving processes, maintain group effectiveness and develop group identification. They should also be dynamic, passionate, have a motivational influence on other people, be solution-focused and seek to inspire others.”³

Andrew Frankel concludes the article by stating that Senior Nurses “must use their leadership behaviour to positively influence organisational outcomes and need to appreciate the inter-relationship between developing nursing practice, improving quality of care and optimising patient outcomes. Healthcare organisations need nurse leaders who can develop nursing care, are an advocate for the nursing profession and have a positive effect on health care through leadership.”³

Patients rely on nurses to only perform their duties to the best of their abilities, to passionately care for individual needs and to ensure excellent patient care outcomes.

References

1. www.icn.ch/news/nurses-voice-lead-health-all [Accessed 15 May 2019].
2. Wong CA, Cummings .G, Ducharme L. (2013) The relationship between nursing leadership and patient outcomes: a systematic review update. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 2013,21 (5),709-724.
3. Nursing Times Special Supplement, Leadership Skills for Nurses Frankel Andrew, Aug 24, 2011, What leadership styles should senior nurses develop?