

Roles of the Members of the Health Care Team and

Team Collaboration

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In a modern day health care facility, many things must be done correctly for it to run and function properly. Two of the most important things that help a modern day health care facility get things done correctly are the roles of each member in the health care team and team collaboration. Each member of the health care team must know what their part is and must be able to do their part correctly. The members of the health care team must also be able to communicate what they have done and their findings to the other members of the health care team as well, so that everyone in the health care team is on the same page. Nurses are one of the more important members on the health care team. With their roles, they can help the team function better and enhance patient outcomes. The members of the healthcare team must use their roles to contribute to the team and use the knowledge they find in collaboration with other members.

The members of the healthcare team all have different roles that they each must perform and all come from different educational backgrounds. An important member of the health care team is the nurse. They play an important part in caring for the patient, as they are the “primary care providers for individuals, families, and communities in an ambulatory setting” (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). They also teach the patient and family (“Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). The nurse can come from many different educational backgrounds. There are Diploma, Associate’s, Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral levels to nursing, but for every level, the nurse must take the NCLEX test and pass it to practice nursing (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.; “Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). The physician is another important member. They specialize in

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pathophysiology, recognition of signs and symptoms of disease, and application of scientific method to the understanding of disease (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). To be a physician, one must possess at least a bachelor's degree and has to graduate from medical school (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). Residency comes after medical school graduation and this is where the physician trains in a specialty (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). Afterwards, the physician must then get licensed by the Board of Medicine in the state of practice (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). The pharmacist is the member of the health care team that dispenses drugs and medications prescribed by physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). Pharmacists must have at least a bachelor’s degree to get into pharmacy school. After graduation of pharmacy school, the pharmacist must perform an internship under the supervision of a registered pharmacist to become licensed (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). The dietitian, also known as a nutritionist, promotes health by fostering the practice of proper nutrition (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.; “Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). For one to become a dietitian, one must have a bachelor’s degree in nutrition and must pass a national exam for certification (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.; “Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). The psychiatrist and the psychologist both specialize in mental health and behavioral disorders and they provide counseling to the patient (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.; “Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). Psychiatrists are physicians with a specialty in psychology (“Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). Psychologists have a PhD in psychology and to become licensed, they must perform an internship (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). The social worker works with clients on issues like unemployment, illness,

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disability, housing, abuse, and financial problems (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.).

Social workers have at least a bachelor’s degree in social work and to become licensed, they must complete a written and oral test that is given by the state of practice (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). The interpreter assists other health care team members in communicating with non-English speaking patients in their native language (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). There are no formal licensing or accreditation processes to become an interpreter (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). They may receive training in medical terminology in order to be able to interpret in a health care setting (“Members of the health care team,” n.d.). The spiritual counselor plays an important role in providing the spiritual needs of the patient and their family (“Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). The spiritual counselor has a degree in divinity or theology and has training in counseling and special training in working with the sick and dying (“Who are the members of the comprehensive health care team?,” 2011). With different educational backgrounds and very different roles, the members of the health care team each contribute many things to the health care team.

The nurse has many roles, which must be used to provide patient safe care. A nurse’s first and foremost role is that of a caregiver (Craven & Hirnle, 2010). They also have a role of being decision makers, where they must continually identify problems and obstacles in the promotion, restoration, and maintenance of health (Craven & Hirnle, 2010). Another important role of the nurse is that of patient advocate. Here they protect the patient by communicating the patients’ needs and promote a safe environment for them (Craven & Hirnle, 2010). Nurses are also coordinators on the health care team (Craven & Hirnle, 2010). To promote, restore and maintain health, the nurse must coordinate that which the members of the health care team offer (Craven

& Hirnle, 2010). Nurses are also educators. They provide patients information on diseases, prevention, nutrition, and healthy behaviors (Craven & Hirnle, 2010). The communicator is central to all the other roles of a nurse. The nurse is the one who usually spends the most time with the patient, so they can identify problems or improvements in the plan of care and communicate them to other members of the health care team. Apker, Ford, and Propp (2005) state that “nurses are central figures of the health care team who have the potential to unify patient care team members; they are in a unique position to enhance team functioning and patient outcomes.”

Nurses also play an important part in grief, mourning, and loss. Patient death is part of any nursing job, so therefore, every nurse will have to go through it at some point in their career. This will include telling the family of the loss of the patient (Reid, McDowell, & Hoskins, 2011). This is one of most difficult and most dreaded part of being a nurse (Reid, McDowell, & Hoskins, 2011). During the death of a patient, the nurses needs to communicate with the family, answer questions, ensure understanding, and offering help to obtain counseling (Reid, McDowell, & Hoskins, 2011). When the doctor is talking to the family about what has happened to their loved one, what is said can sometimes be misinterpreted, mostly due to terminology used, and the family isn't really focused on what the doctor has to say, they are more focused on the fact that their relative is gone, so therefore the nurse will have to take notes while the doctor is speaking and do a follow up with the grieving family (Reid, McDowell, & Hoskins, 2011). The nurse's big role here is that of an advocate and the communication between the doctor, the nurse, and the family is very important (Reid, McDowell, & Hoskins, 2011). The nurse has to identify coping mechanisms and facilitate disclosure (Schuster, & Nykolyn, 2010). Nurses will grieve when losing a patient, but it is important to remember that the patient's family comes first,

so the nurse needs to be sensitive to their needs and has to be professional (Reid, McDowell, & Hoskins, 2011; Schuster, & Nykolyn, 2010).

With all the different parts each health care team member does, it is important that the health care team collaborates properly and effectively. Apker et al. (2010) state that:

If teams are the foundation of health care delivery, then “communication is the cement which holds teams together” (Poole & Real, 2003, p. 396). Effective communication between health care professionals is a necessary condition for the provision of quality patient care (Goldszer, 2004). Through communication, nurses, physicians, allied health professionals, and assistant personal coordinate work efforts, collaborate in decision making, and combine their different skills as interdependent team members. Clearly, communication at the bedside is an important component of caregivers’ roles, but effective team interaction skills are also for the good of the patient (Bailey & Armer, 1998).

Team collaboration allows for collective understanding and efficient coordination between the disciplines (Burzotta & Noble, 2011). Different members of the health care team have to share skills, experience, and knowledge to identify diagnosis, treatment plans, potential patient issues, and interventions in team collaboration (Apker et al., 2010). While team collaboration is seen as a milestone in health care, it does face some problems (Apker et al., 2010). The work environment of the health care setting, the different roles each discipline has, gender and generational differences, and the old hierarchical system that health care has been using for quite some time is making it difficult to put team collaboration in practice (Apker et al., 2010; O’Daniel & Rosenstein, (2008); Seago, 2008). With team collaboration, all members of the health care team are viewed as equal, while with the hierarchical system, the physician is at the

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top and is viewed as the leader, while the nurse and other non-physician personnel are at the bottom and viewed as subordinates to the physician(O'Daniel & Rosenstein, (2008); Seago, 2008). More strategies need to be used or tried, at least, to overcome these difficulties and to foster team collaboration because error due to lack of communication was the leading cause of sentinel events from 1995 to 2004 as reported by the Joint Commission (O'Daniel & Rosenstein, (2008); Seago, 2008).

The roles of each member are important in communication and team collaboration. Each member of the team has specific roles that they must accomplish. Team collaboration must also be put into practice between the members of the health care team. It does not matter whether it is dealing with patient safety, treating a patient, teaching a client before their discharge, or to helping a dying individual accept the life they've lived, team collaboration helps improve how a health care facility functions and helps improve the safety of the patient.

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