

Title	A Practical Guide to Nursing Leadership
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Course No	NL4022508
Contact Hour	1

Purpose

The goal of this course is to outline important elements of nursing leadership and how nursing leaders can impact the future of the profession.

Objectives

1. Differentiate between leadership and management.
 2. Apply the concept of effective leadership to the profession of nursing.
 3. List three characteristics of an effective leader
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A Practical Guide to Nursing Leadership

A leader is more than an individual who has achieved power through title and position. Nursing leadership is no exception to this concept. A nursing leader inspires others to excel and achieve outstanding results for the patient population cared for within an organization. Nursing leadership must seek out a practice model to guide patient care, promote the profession of nursing within healthcare organizations, and manage quality programs in the organization in order to ensure that exceptional care is delivered. This paper will define the concept of leadership, apply the concept of leadership to nursing, discuss supporting propositions for the concept, and outline uses of the concept in the clinical setting.

A leader is defined as a person that is responsible for guiding or directing others. In contrast to the definition of a leader, a manager is defined as a person who oversees resources and expenditures. Managers receive power simply by the title and position that is held within an organization. Many managers focus on the bottom line and attempt to control all the aspects within the environment. Managers do what is right while leaders do the right thing. An effective leader draws out the best people have to offer and encourages individuals to take on challenges and responsibilities. Effective leaders also inspire others and create environments where all employees desire success and high standards.

Effective nursing leadership requires the nurse administrator to be more than a manager of resources. Over the years, nursing has struggled with the concept of leadership. Nurses are typically promoted to positions of authority because of strong clinical skills in managing patient care. Nurse managers frequently use the same management skills that brought successful outcomes in the clinical setting to the administrative arena. In contrast to nurse managers, effective nursing leaders are able to promote the profession of nursing, influence the direction of practice within an organization, and effectively maintain the quality of service delivered by the department of nursing.

Great leaders inspire us; they ignite our passion and work through our emotions (1). In order for nursing leadership to be effective in the task of overseeing and directing patient care there

are some essential components that nursing leaders must possess. These essential components include a dynamic and inspirational personality, the ability to promote the profession of nursing, and the ability to focus on quality indicators and quality outcomes. If nurse administrators are to remain effective and lead nursing into the future they must possess these characteristics. The nurse leader who can effectively incorporate these components into daily practice will see dramatic changes in the nursing staff, the quality of care, and in the way other departments view and respect the discipline of nursing.

Another important role of a nurse leader is that of communicator. Effective leaders communicate possibilities. These possibilities are communicated from staff to senior leadership and from senior leadership to staff. Successful nursing leaders connect with the front staff through the use of effective communication. Leaders who are able to communicate effectively with key players within the organization are seen as people who connect with others, listen, and learn from all individuals within an organization. Communication goes both ways – it is impossible to be a good communicator without being a good listener. Nursing leaders who can successfully interact with all staff members and respect what skills and talents they bring to the table inspire in others the will to follow and achieve the vision and goals of the organization. Good leaders build strong relationships partly through good communication and managing others emotions (2). Through effective communication and interaction, the staff learns about the leader's vision. In sharing the vision with staff, leaders allow the others to form opinions about the vision. Communicating the departmental vision and outlining a wide variety of possibilities for achieving the vision will also prevent surprises and disharmony among staff members (3). Leaders do not influence staff to follow the vision. Instead, leaders influence staff to address identified problems, recognize avenues to successfully deal with the problems, and move towards the achievement of departmental goals. Staff members should have a voice in the direction of the organization, if they do not patient care may suffer as staff becomes more unproductive. If nursing leadership can utilize effective communication, staff will know the departmental vision and will provide input on ways to achieve the vision. Communication is essential to keep staff on the same page as nursing leadership so that all individuals within the department are moving in the same direction and striving for the same goals.

In addition to effective communication, nursing leadership is responsible for guiding the direction of nursing practice within an organization. A nursing care model defines a framework to care for patients (4). A nursing model is important to define the purpose and value of the profession. Without a nursing model nursing leadership will be unable to successfully articulate the contribution of nursing in an interdisciplinary healthcare setting. It is through the use of nursing theory that a solid foundation of practice and organizational structure is established. Nursing leadership must design and implement a nursing system that will address the needs of the patient population within the organization in order to improve quality outcomes. The use of nursing models allows for standardization of the delivery of care. This standardization will improve the quality of care provided to members within the healthcare organization. Without a model to guide nursing, the departmental goals for nursing remain unclear and the staff will not know what direction to go or how to effectively achieve quality results.

Nursing leadership must also promote the profession of nursing within an organization if nursing is to be valued and respected by other disciplines, such as administration, medicine, respiratory therapy, and physical therapy. When leadership is able to articulate the value of the profession and the unique services the department of nursing provides within healthcare organizations, administrators will stop looking to the department of nursing for financial cuts and reduction of services. Ineffective nursing administrators are unable to successfully articulate the value of the profession and place the department at risk for financial cuts, which may result in higher nurse to patient ratios and the use of unlicensed assistive personnel to deliver care to patients. Nursing needs to demonstrate that it contributes to the organization's mission and the relationship between the mission and patient care. A nursing department guided by visionary leaders will begin to speak in a unified voice. The unification of the

department of nursing will cause other departments within health care organizations to take notice and begin to show the department of nursing respect. Other disciplines will also be valuing the role that nursing plays in providing patient care to the various populations within the organization.

The promotion of nursing in an organization is an essential aspect of effective nursing leadership. Without effective nursing leadership a common vision for the department of nursing is only a dream. When effective leadership is lacking and there is no direction for the department, nursing will continue to flounder with no direction. In the absence of a vision, nurses will also be unable to assume effective leadership roles within healthcare organizations. Leadership that provides the department of nursing with clear ideas about the profession will assist the staff in articulating to others what nursing can do for patients and how nursing contributes in a positive manner to patient care. This will allow nursing to take the lead in directing the care of patients at the bedside.

Monitoring the quality of care delivered by the nursing department is another role of nursing leadership. Effective nursing leaders are responsible for ensuring that quality care is delivered to members. Effective leaders ensure that nurses deliver care in a financially responsible manner, while supporting professional growth and development of the nursing staff and themselves (5). In order to meet these goals, nursing leadership must conceptualize a plan of action and work towards successful implementation of that plan of action. It is also the role of nursing leadership to establish quality indicators based on nursing research and clinical based practice models. When leadership establishes a practice model, which is based upon research finding, and monitors for clinical outcomes, there is a definite increase in quality. When quality is improved and desired outcomes are achieved, then everyone wins. The members receiving care win. The department of nursing gains notoriety and the organization gains an improved reputation for the quality of services that are delivered within the organization. This is only possible through effective nursing leadership willing to establish a model of care, implement that model of care, and monitor the outcomes of services rendered by the department of nursing.

In order to have successful evidence based nursing practice within the division of patient care services, it is imperative that leadership support continuing education and establish a core curriculum to ensure that staff have the appropriate tools to meet the standards of care set forth by the department of nursing. Nursing leadership is also responsible for monitoring quality outcomes and reviewing systems in order to identify and correct problems that may prevent or detract from the quality of care delivered to patients within the organization. Effective leadership looks at outcomes and seeks to associate deviations in outcomes to a root cause. When the root cause has been determined, leadership develops a plan of action with input from nursing staff in order to rectify the issue or system problem and seeks to improve the quality of care.

The concepts of successful nursing leadership can be applied in a variety of healthcare settings. These settings include acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, government agencies, and communities setting to name just a few. Nursing leadership must articulate the importance of the nursing profession no matter what clinical area the leader practices in. It is up to the leaders in nursing to communicate with both medical and non-medical professionals what it is that nursing can do to impact and improve the quality of life for all individuals. When nursing operates under a common vision driven by dynamic nursing leadership, there will be a definite improvement in the quality of care delivered to patients, along with improved morale of nurses within the various practice settings.

This concept of nursing leadership can and should be applied in the daily practice of nursing leaders. As nursing leaders deal with administrators who are seeking to justify budgets expenditures, departmental efficiencies, and quality of care, nursing leaders need to be

prepared to speak to the issues and concerns of nursing. Failure of leadership to address these topics may cause the department of nursing to lose respect and financial standing within the organization. The ability to establish nursing as an important discipline within the healthcare setting and promote the value of nursing is not something that can be done overnight. Leadership must continually work to establish nursing and its credibility within an organization. When nursing leaders are able to demonstrate in their daily practice what nursing is and what the discipline of nursing has to offer to patients in any practice setting, it will be less likely that battles will continue to occur over such issues as staffing ratios, budgets, and quality of care.

In one small urban community hospital, the department of nursing lacked any leadership or direction. The nurse managers functioned primarily as managers and spent little time guiding or directing nursing staff. The management team did little to ensure that quality care was delivered to the patient populations it served. Oftentimes excuses were made for mistakes and corrective action to fix system issues did not occur. The department of nursing was floundering and the nursing department had little respect from other disciplines. Physicians were outwardly concerned over the quality of nursing care that was being delivered to the patients and were aggressive in demanding that the problem be addressed.

The administration and senior leadership of the organization felt strongly that new nursing leadership was needed for the department. The decision was made to hire a new director of nursing in order to effectively manage the issues and concerns that had been identified. Over a period of two and a half years the director worked to hire a new team of managers who could lead and inspire the department of nursing to seek out a higher standard of care. The director also established a mission and vision for the department of nursing. The expectation from leadership was that all nurses would strive to live out the mission and vision established by the department of nursing in their daily practice. As the new management team came on board staff initially were frustrated by the major changes that were occurring and the expectations that were being placed upon them by the new nursing leadership team. Over time the nursing staff came to respect the nursing leaders. Staff nurses began to live up to the high standards set by leadership and began valuing the care and services offered by the nursing department. Physicians began to recognize the value of nursing and respect the profession of nursing within the hospital environment. It was through effective and visionary nursing leadership that positive changes began to occur.

As the nursing staff sees changes in the nursing leadership within an organization there will be a noticeable difference in attitudes. As staff morale goes up, there will also be an increase in the quality of care delivered and a subsequent rise in patient satisfaction scores. Through the use of nursing models that direct the delivery of care and consistent expectations with staff, there will be improvements noted. Staff will also notice an increased respect that other disciplines have for the department of nursing. Some of these nurses will recognize for the first time the value of nursing and the expertise that this discipline brings to the clinical arena. Staff nurses will also become more involved in monitoring quality and quality indicators. The apathy and complacency that once existed will begin to disappear and nurses will see that they have control over their practice environment and the quality of care that is delivered to the patients. There is a direct correlation between the ability of nursing leaders to lead and the moral of staff nurses. When nursing leaders are able to inspire and motivate staff, staff members begin to feel a sense of empowerment and knowledge about where the department of nursing is headed and how they can participate in obtaining the goals set forth by leadership.

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Course Exam

1. A manager can be defined as an individual who is responsible for guiding or directing others.
 True False
2. Nursing leaders are responsible for monitoring quality and outcomes within healthcare organizations.
 True False
3. The ability to listen is a key feature to quality leadership.
 True False
4. Visionary leadership can inspire staff and improve quality.
 True False
5. Effective leaders leave staff to their own devices and provide little guidance in decision-making.
 True False
6. Nursing leadership must design and implement a system that will address the needs of the patient population being served.
 True False
7. Nursing leaders do not need to promote nursing within healthcare organization because other disciplines within healthcare know and understand the value nursing brings to the multidisciplinary team.
 True False
8. Nursing theory is one effective way that nursing leaders can establish a common vision for the nursing within an organization.
 True False
9. Successful nursing leaders connected with the front staff through the use of effective communication.
 True False
10. If nursing leadership effectively communicates with nursing staff, the staff will know the

departmental vision and will provide input on ways to achieve the vision.

True False