Said Another Way

Nursing Care: A Lost Art

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Introduction

The nursing shortage is wreaking havoc on the profession. Nurses report being overwhelmed by the workload and the lack of staff. Faced with understaffing and increased paper work, nurses are no longer able to provide the care they were trained to do. As a result, job satisfaction is being reported at an all-time low. Nurses are questioning the quality of care they are able to give to their patients. In this article, I address the effects of the nursing shortage on nursing care and how the shortage has deteriorated the core of the profession: caring.

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Literature Review

Nursing care has seemingly gone to the wayside. Registered nurses are spending more and more time charting, filling out paper work, and doing tasks that keep them from doing basic nursing care. In a study conducted by McNeese-Smith (1999), patient care was named as the most significant factor for job satisfaction. The nurses in this study further identified five subareas of patient care that promoted job satisfaction. They were: experience of providing care, quality of care, quantity of work, autonomy, and support. Scott (2004) echoed these findings in her study of nurses in a long-term care facility. She found that nurses who perceived they had enough time to provide care were more satisfied than those who did not. Scott also found that nurses who perceived they had enough time to provide care were more satisfied than those who did not.

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good care, personal praise from patients and family, joy from watching patients’ health improve, opportunity to make a major difference in a person’s life, and feeling emotional or spiritual reward for providing good care (McNeese-Smith).

The nursing shortage has gauged a deep hole in nurses’ reported level of job satisfaction. Nurses and patients alike are feeling the strains of the shortage, not only in terms of nursing care quality but in terms of safety. In 2003, nurses in Arizona gathered together to draw attention to the need for improved staffing ratios for safe, quality care (California Nurse, 2003). Patient safety is an essential component of quality care (Ballard, 2003). In response to the nursing shortage, patients are being encouraged to enlist a family member as a “clinical monitor” to ensure safe care (Entwistle, 2004). Patients’ perception of quality and safety of their care is most significantly correlated to the nursing care they received (Suhonen, 2005).

“Nurses at the bedside are essential to patients well being” (Erlen, 2004, pp. 61–66). As nurses we know this. However, with the strain of the current nursing shortage, it is difficult to meet all the demands placed on us. Therefore, we must remember that the core of nursing is caring.

Conclusion

Until the nursing shortage subsides, nurses will continue to be overwhelmed with paper work and understaffing, and patient safety and the quality of care will continue to suffer. Despite all of this, nurses dealing with these issues need to prevent the crumbling of the foundation of the profession. They need to work together to prevent the loss of caring from the art of nursing.

However, with the strain of the current nursing shortage, it is difficult to meet all the demands placed on us. Therefore, we must remember that the core of nursing is caring.

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