

Guest Editorial

Nurse managers: are they caring for COVID-19 patients?

There was a question on a social media page asking if nurse managers should also work with the COVID-19 patients or only attend to the paperwork. Some nurses indicated that they have absent leadership on the patient floor, while others indicate that their leadership and management were next to them taking care of patients. This question leads to some reflection on how managers lead their teams in this pandemic we are facing.

Nursing leaders became many hospitals and communities' lifeline. It becomes a nurse leader's responsibility to focus on staff and patient outcomes and organise the work.

Leadership is defined by the Oxford dictionary as: "the action of leading a group of people or an organisation" while the verb lead means "...to go with one by holding them by the hand... etc. while moving forward".

Looking at these definitions, it becomes imperative for nurse leaders and managers to work with their teams and followers. The nurses and the community are fearful, tired and unsure. Nurses leaders are just as unsure of what the future holds in store, but you cannot now show your weakness or how tired you are. You are the motivation and the beacon that leads the way. Walking in front shines the light on you. Practice what you preach while everyone is looking at you.

Leaders practice what matters culturally and foster trust in the organisation. If nurse leaders did not have empathy, listening

skills, the trust of their teams and patients, and the ability to communicate, manage, and lead, work suffered or at times did not get done at all. Nurse leaders and teams at all levels must develop capabilities that enable them to work and lead effectively while supporting the human needs and representing the nursing culture of caring.

A Harvard blog (<https://hbr.org/2020/07/5-tips-for-communicating-with-employees-during-a-crisis>) that discusses tips for communicating with employees during a crisis highlights the following guidelines:

- Communicate frequently and clearly to reduce fear.
- Provide safe channels for feedback and keep confidences.
- Provide resources for employees to remain productive, whether on-site or off-site.
- Address concerns about job security.
- Provide a plan for the future by sharing strategy and plans for the future.

As a nurse leader, let us know how are you leading your team, how do you foster trust, how did your communication change in the last year? Please forward your contribution to info@fnl.co.za.

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