

Editorial

Nurse – to value a positive attitude



Nurses, as part of the wider community in a country and the world, are just as exposed to the realities of the real world as all the other members of the public. When the negativity and the bad news are added to the stressful and complex environments nurses are exposed to in their workplace, it can be expected that nurses may have a negative attitude towards life and work. The negativity experienced can contribute to high levels of emotional exhaustion and stress, causing anxiety for nurses, patients, and their families. The unusual circumstances during the height of the pandemic, when nurses were the only link between patients and their families, highlighted the need for nurses to have a sound basis to manage their own stress levels. Nurses must be confident in their communication skills to ensure that the messages or information they share are conveyed in such a manner that the receiver clearly understands and that their communication is not adding to everyone's stress levels. To achieve such confidence, adequate preparation and collaboration are required between nurses and other multidisciplinary team members. A patient admitted to a hospital for a few days will interact with many employees, ranging from the admin clerk admitting them to the hospital, to nurses, physicians, technicians, physiotherapists, and phlebotomists; the list is endless! These interactions involve many occasions where critical information will be shared, making team collaboration essential to ensure that patient safety is maintained. If health professionals do not communicate effectively, misunderstanding, lack of critical information, unclear telephone prescriptions or orders, for example, can impact the care that should be provided.

Poor attitudes and job dissatisfaction of nurses are the result of shortages of specialised and experienced nursing staff, heavy workloads due to the shortages, salaries that are not aligned with the responsibilities of the position, lack of support and respect from managers, poor quality or lack of equipment and materials, and conflict between team members.

Nurses' negative attitudes could undermine an institution's ability to provide quality patient care and improve patient

outcomes. Nurses with negative attitudes can't live their dreams and their passion which results in a person experiencing job dissatisfaction. Patient complaints, unprofessional conduct, negligence, and malpractice incidents are only a few of the results when nurses not satisfied with their jobs portray negative attitudes. Nurses with negative attitudes can be viewed as an occupational hazard, and the management must address this as a critical matter in providing a safe environment for patients, staff and clients.

Nurse management and nurse leaders must take time to review and assess the attitudes and job satisfaction of nurses in their employment. Positive patient experiences and quality care with improved patient outcomes are directly linked to professionalism, job satisfaction and positive attitudes of the nursing team. The positive attitudes and behaviour of nurses towards patients are the result of their perception of the core values of the profession, training and development in practice, moral support, and active involvement of the management in the workplace. The opinion of the patients, their family, and friends of nurses' ability to provide compassionate care are affected by the attitude of the nurses. This is, therefore, a core responsibility of nurse leaders to ensure that nurses in their employment understand the effect of their attitude on the patients and their colleagues. Mentoring and continuous support of nurses working with high volumes of patients and those working in very stressful environments must be a priority for the management team.

Changing negative attitudes will involve actions to change an individual's job dissatisfaction. To have positive attitudes, nurses must enjoy their jobs—this can only be achieved by creating enjoyable work environments, appointing and developing passionate, caring nursing colleagues who respect each other and who constantly strive toward quality patient-care outcomes.

Attitude change requires a team effort, and the management of the healthcare facility, together with the team in the wards or departments, must set the scene to change—it will take a concerted effort from everyone to take up the challenge. There are no instant solutions, but it is worthwhile to do staff satisfaction surveys to determine the core challenges underlying job dissatisfaction. Use these outcomes to design a workplace strategy with specific interventions targeting the improvement of job satisfaction and attitudes of nurses, which will significantly improve the quality of patient care and patient outcomes. These outcomes in itself will contribute to an improvement in job satisfaction!

Annelie Meiring

Editor: PNT