

Quality Assurance a Key to Success in Nursing: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Quality nowadays become a more important part of our life in every aspect, peoples are continuously looking for good quality services, so any organizations before providing any service they consider quality is one of the essential component in their system. The nurses play an important role in the health care system for providing high quality care; the nursing process helps to regularly monitor and evaluate what are the health care services are available and what else needed to improve their quality. This process help the health care organizations to effective use their quality assurance resources to focus on high priority in quality care issues. But the nurses face more challenges like low professional and socio-economic status, gender issues, employment problems, work place harassment, over workload etc, this all will impact on quality outcomes.

Key words: Quality assurance, Quality Nursing care and Standards

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive health care field, providing quality health care is one of the most challenging issues for health care professionals all over the world. With lack of resources it is difficult to overcome the increasing demands. The advance in medical field and technology creates an overwork and job stress, this lead to increase in error and decrease the quality care.^[1]

Hoe in a study (2007) described, Quality assurance means assuring minimum quality standards in health care settings which has been set by an external regulatory body, through accreditation or certification combined with regular inspections.^[2] In India, National Accreditation Board for Hospital and Health Care Providers (NABH) is an authorized body to grant accreditation for all healthcare organizations, they set a standard level to maintain quality assurance, and to endorse the use of valid and reliable measures

of quality and patient safety to improve healthcare.^[3]

According to Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), quality health care is doing a right skill in a right way by the correct person at a right time to have consistent high quality-care at lower costs.^[4] If we use the resources in an efficient way it will enhances the trust in effectiveness of system.^[5]

Bradshaw et.al., (2014) described that interpersonal violence due to errors in health service system will negatively impact and lead to significant trauma and fatalities, so the efforts made to ensure adherent to specified standards of care and the programs developed to monitor and enhance the service implementation. Nursing regulatory bodies maintained certain standards to provide quality care and it assesses what are the nursing processes are in place and what else needs to be implemented to better the system.^[6]

The Nurses play an important role in health care system, so they need to sensitize and train as per the standards of Quality assurance. The Organization has to provide proper resources and suitable environment to provide quality and safety care.

DEFINITION

Quality assurance is defined as a “process designed to objectively and systematically monitor and evaluate the quality and appropriateness of patient care, pursue opportunities to improve patient care, and resolve identified problems”. (Joint Commission, 1991) [7]

Principles of quality assurance:

The following principles were listed in the book entitles as “Leading and Managing in Nursing” by Patricia (2014)

a) The Quality Management operates most effectively within a flat, democratic and organizational structure. b) The managers and workers must be committed to quality improvement. c) The quality management goal is to improve system and processes and not to assign blame. d) Customers define quality. e) Quality improvement focuses on outcome. f) Decisions must be based on facts. [8]

Dr. W. Edwards Deming, outlined 14 points regarding principle of Transformation (1982, 1986). It helps the nursing leaders and managers at all levels of health care organization can apply these principles in their work place to implement quality care. [9]

Areas of quality assurance:

- Outpatient department
- Emergency medical services
- In- patient services
- Specialty services
- Training

Standards of nursing practice:

The standard in nursing defines the outcomes, activities and structural resources need for better quality care.

The setting of nursing standards helps to translate best evidence into best practice. [10] These standards are written in formal statements about the ideal level of

nursing quality .They express the desired quality level and guide the practice of nursing and helpful to evaluate and measure the reached level of standards. [11] The standards are directed toward the structure, process and outcome issue and it will guide the review of the health care system and function and staff performance and client care.

According to JCAHO the organization have a written plan for assessing and improving quality and it describes the objectives, scope, organization and the essential mechanisms for effective monitoring, evaluating and improving activities. These kinds of activities include quality patient care, clinical performance and privileges, therapeutic functions, infection control, utilization review and risk management. [12]

The nursing service is a goal directed and adaptable according to the needs of the patients, family and community during health and illness. [13] The main purpose of standards of nursing is to fulfill the professions obligation to provide and improve their practice. They bear the primary responsibility and accountability for nursing care clients receive. Standards help to reflect the current knowledge in the field and therefore provisional, dynamic, and subject to testing and subsequent change. [14]

Purposes and need of quality assurance in nursing:

The main purpose of Quality assurance is a way of preventing mistakes and to assure the public that the services provided by nurses are committed to continuing competence and quality improvement in order to meet the expectations of receiver, management and regulatory body. [15]

In a nursing process the quality assurance will assess what are the health care service are in place and what else needed to improve the quality. [16]

Challenges of nurses in providing quality care:

- Providing a quality care to patients with lack of resources like infrastructures,

- equipment, and patient's financial status all these are a major concern in today's health care environment. [17]
- The challenges are due to personnel problems like lack of skill and training, staff indiscipline. [18]
 - The unreasonable and uncooperative attitude of the patients and their family members due to illness, anxiety, absence of immediate response to treatment, ignorance about prognosis, late attendance etc. [18]
 - There is lack of regulatory bodies empowered by legislation to appraise the standards in nursing and medical care to regulate the quality care. [18]
 - No proper maintenance of institutional building and equipment's used, so these equipments cannot be used in giving nursing care, so it is necessary to ensure adequate after sale service. [18]
 - To improve quality of nursing care the nurses apply their knowledge, skills and experience to provide right care and ensure the patients will get benefited from the quality care. Continuous educational program is important to achieve this. [19]
 - Due to shortage they may chance for errors, negligence and health professionals may involved in malpractice. [20]
 - The non availability of essential drugs and supplies, adulterated and substandard drugs, improperly sterilized or pyrogenic materials this lead to poor quality care. [18]
 - Inadequate support services for nurses like ward aid, helper etc. in hospitals and the nursing budget is not separately sanctioned. Nursing posting not up to the ratio as per the norms defined by nursing council. [18]
 - Lack of hospital information systems, this play a vital role in effective management for the appraisal of quality care. [21]
- They should start with establishing their goals and objectives of their practice and review it regularly and maintain excellent safety standards.
 - Nurses play a key role in hospitals to promote high quality care cost-effective outcomes and better patient safety by interpreting and applying the policies and procedure guidelines as per the standards. [22, 23]
 - Nurses should identify and coordinate the needs of patients and their family members from preadmission to till discharge based on age and cultural and individual patient needs. They should acts as good communicator with the organization, providers and patients and they should helpful for collection of patient information data. [23]
 - The nurses usually evaluate their work and behaviour from the data collected from patients and collaborate with physicians and other health professionals to develop patient-care guidelines and this help to implement if they need any change to improve patient care. By monitoring themselves and their colleagues, they ensure qualitative requirements are met as per standards. [23, 24]
 - They train and educate other nurses for the best practices and help them to improve quality of work. [25]
 - They are responsible for taking new initiatives and assist in quality improvements. They should actively monitor the progress of patient care processes by using the spreadsheets, flow diagrams, computer programs, and control charts for recording and monitoring data.
 - They create system s using the observations, surveys made in daily clinical practice help to conduct a health record audit and compare the care provided to standards of quality care. [24, 25]

Role of nurses in quality assurance:

Current scenario of nursing in India:

Nurses are the backbone of any medical services or patient care in the health

sector for providing high quality care. [26] But the nurse to population ratio in India is very lower than in developing countries. [27] There are various factors which will affect the quality of nursing care they are:

- The nurses face low professional and socio-economic status, gender issues, lack of political interest on part of the government and unregulated health sector, this all lead to major cause for shortage of nurses.
- Some nurse experience Work place harassment by doctors and the management system, the nurses should give respect and dignity. [26] A study of Gaffney (2012) shows the deliberate, repetitive, and aggressive behaviors can cause physical and psychological distress among nurses and disturb their work and threaten safety care, patient outcomes and the delivery of quality of care, as well as the erosion of personal health and professional wellbeing in nurses. [28] These behaviours have often gone unchecked and sometimes even worse, accepted as part of the system. So the nurses have been reported to leave their job in that particular place due to this harassment. [29]
- The recruitment policies, processes and outcomes in government and private health sectors have been reported to be highly unethical and inefficient. [30] Wage is an important factor that helpful for good nurse outcomes. [31] But often they have paid very low salaries as against the labour standards in private sectors. [26]
- Some of the nurses not get any employment benefits like provident fund and gratuity and also they not even given health coverage while they are prone to face high risk of infections. Lack of union to fight for this cause. [26]
- Nurses sometime unable to provide high quality care to the patients due to lack of staffs and more night duty on their job, the advanced standardized methods of care, inflexible protocols, cause over workload and stress among nurses lead

to unable to provide quality care to patients. [32]

- To overcome these above mentioned conditions most of the nurses are migrating to developing countries. This kind of migration will again lead to shortage of nursing professionals in India and lead to quality issue. So there is a need of inclusive planning, adequate financing and political commitment to overcome this health professionals shortage in India. [27]

QUALITY ASSURANCE: A KEY TO SUCCESS

The key for success in future in any health care organization is how they manage their resources effectively and efficiently. The quality assurance nurse must be aware of the economic and financial issues and it will affect patient care delivery and individual and also organization outcomes. The quality assurance, utilization management, peer review, program evaluation, utilization of clinical research and the quality improvement are explored as a main component in comprehensive quality management program and they are key to any organization survival in an every changing, highly competitive health care environment. [33]

The Quality indicators are important in improving health structures, processes and outcomes, it act as a base for improving process quality of patient care. [3] The critical factors which are essential in Quality improvement are explained below

Need to understand system:

The environment where the nurses provide care to patients can determine the quality and safety of patient care. The nurses apply their knowledge, skills, and experience to care their patients according to the changing needs. So the nurse should understand the complexity of the work environment and engage in strategies that help to improve and effect in quality and safer care. Give importance to the need of improvement in health care systems that

enable nurses to provide the right care and ensure that patients will benefit from it. [17]

Reduce variation:

The care pathways, flow sheets and standardized orders will help to reduce variation in nursing services and practices. [34] This pathway helps to optimal resource utilization and improves communication among the physicians and other health care professionals. This reduces unnecessary variation in the delivery of and outputs from care. This help to improve quality of care and collaboration with other staffs. [35]

Leadership at every level:

In a health care setting, the leaders have to be accountable for safety and quality care throughout the system. Their responsibility is increasingly become more complex due to the dynamic nature of health care system and the competing demands of resources, pressure for achieving high quality and safety care and at last it should be regularly monitored and evaluated. So the leadership in nursing is a needed quality at every level and across all the health care settings, so the knowledge has to be transferable to one another. [36]

Data and measurement:

To improve the nursing care it is necessary to measure the quality and safety care from the data that is provided. This incorporates efficiency, timeliness and congruence established criteria describing performance. [12]

Resources to support implementation and staff development in nursing: Nowadays implementation of evidence based practice in nursing is given priority. [37] The staff development creates awareness about the value of continuous learning and professional accountability and professional involvement. [12]

CONCLUSION

Nowadays the health care organizations are looking forward committed multitask quality from the nursing professionals, because they play an important role in providing the quality care

to patients and their family members. They face more challenges to cope with the standards. But the responsibility for quality control lies not only on nursing professionals or the health care organization but in reality it is a shared one. Each one in the organization has equal responsibility to provide a quality care.

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