Challenges and Opportunities for the Healthcare Administrators Working in Long Term Care and Mental Health Services

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In the clinical setting, healthcare administrators particularly nurses experiences various field relevant challenges that demand them to develop effective professional skills so that quality of care could be maintained. In order to manage patients with long term illness and mental health issues, nurses must be independent, autonomous, non- judgmental and top of the game both in clinical and social terms; such abilities and skills enable them to deal with the demanding and dynamic healing environment in both long term and mental health care.

After analyzing a bulk of relevant literature, it was found that nurses encounter almost similar opportunities and challenges in both long term and mental health care settings along with their corresponding solutions. Some of these opportunities, challenges and knowledge, skills and abilities would be discussed further in order to develop profound understanding about the problem topic.

**Opportunities**

While caring for patients with mental health issues, nurses find an opportunity to develop an emotionally fulfilling relationship with the clients that are passing through the worst stages of their lives. They learn effective rapport building techniques driven by empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (Fiedler et. al., 2012). Besides this, they learn and practice effective stress management techniques such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation techniques, Deep Breathing, Mindfulness, Meditation and self help techniques of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT). These techniques not only help them in professional setting but also in their personal lives where they can use these techniques to overcome job stress and other anxiety provoking situations (Edwards, 2010).

On the other hand, while caring a patient with long term issues, nurses are provided with enough time that helps them get to know the residents along with their families which complete the relationship based model of nursing. Besides this, nurses who look after long term patients do not have any constant support of ancillary healthcare professionals and physicians. Therefore, long term care nurses possess such skills and abilities that ensure their independent practice and autonomy due to which they not only become responsible for maintaining the quality care but also for the quality of life of patients. These are the opportunities that long term care and mental health care administrators encounter during their daily practice.

**Challenges**

Mental health administration requires the nurses to develop sensitivity, compassion and associated interpersonal skills. This is because mental health patients possess some maladjusted thinking patterns, feelings, emotions and behaviors that need to be neutralized through talking and providing safer channels for venting out these repressed attributes (Martin et. al., 2012). In a nutshell, nurses must have excellent communication skills to deal patients and their emotional/ psychological problems. If nurse fails to demonstrate congruence, self disclosure, empathy and unconditional positive regard, outcome would be obvious; patient would fail to develop rapport and therapeutic relationship would be affected (Edwards, 2010). Moreover, while caring for patients with mental health issues, listening to the stories of patients sometime make nurses immensely anxious and they bear too much stress which is something unhealthy for their personal and professional lives. These are some major issues nurses encounter while caring for the patients with mental health issues.

On the other hand, in a long term care, nurses develop good management of chronic conditions but they fail to develop acute care skills that are essential for the development of professional competence. Long term care particularly in geriatric setting makes them stick to the routine activities of patients and keeps them refrained from digging deeper into the acute care setting (Silvestre, 2015). Moreover, elderly population needs different amount and types of drugs as compared to the adult population due to which their activities and knowledge becomes limited to specific population and they may find themselves alien to other patient populations (Silvestre, 2015).

**Knowledge and abilities to overcome these challenges**

As mentioned earlier, nurses must be able to develop effective rapport building skills using Carl Rogers’ (a Humanistic Psychologist) three elements of rapport building; empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (Fiedler et. al., 2012). These elements enable nurses to enter client’s world, feel what he feels, communicate what he thinks, share own experiences, and let the client talk in a non judgmental environment. For example, if a patient is overwhelmed by the guilt of any wrongdoing and starts sharing his personal information; “you did it very wrong” like comments might make him feel embarrassed and he might feel reluctant to communicate further information necessary for history taking (Edwards, 2010). He might create problems through showing uncooperative attitude as well. Hence, these three components need to be practiced in mental health and long term care setting so that a sense of holistic wellbeing could be attained. Besides this, application of self relaxation techniques can eliminate the spell of stress and unwanted work anxieties on the part of nurses hence they must have profound knowledge and practice to apply these techniques for self help (Fiedler et. al., 2012).

Exposure with the different patient settings can be used to enable nurses to acquire diverse nursing skills related to the assessment, diagnosis, prognosis and intervention of illnesses for particular age groups. For that matter, they must keep themselves updated with the recent happenings and knowledge in the nursing world and must make active attempts to perform their duties in different departments during the initial stages of their career development (Silvestre, 2015). Both personal and administrative efforts might be proven helpful for nurses to develop diverse learning experience within the field.

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