

Importance of Soft Skills in a Healthcare Profession

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Introduction

Every industry demands a particular set of skills from its employees to successfully optimize the workplace by utilizing their full potential. In this regard, applicants must possess two types of skills, i.e., hard skills and soft skills, to get a competitive advantage. Measurable and tangible skills are often called hard skills. They also include the technical knowledge and experience that is required to perform a specific job. Therefore, these skills are taught throughout the academic period and practised in labs and other clinical assignments. Nurses are supposed to develop some essential hard skills such as taking vital signs, starting IVs, administering medications, and inserting catheters. However, soft skills are also as important as hard skills, especially for nurses. These skills cannot be measured in terms of specified variables or outcomes but play a significant role in employees' productivity and competitiveness. More importantly, in the healthcare profession, the families and patients are directly observant of the behaviours of nurses and other medical staff, which immensely impacts their satisfaction (Dean & East, 2019). In this regard, the following essay outlines some of the essential soft skills that nurses must develop not only for their successful careers but also for the effectiveness of the services they provide and for the whole healthcare system. In this way, the importance of these soft skills is highlighted by providing various examples from healthcare settings.

Excellent Communication

Excellent communication skills are the fundamental soft skills that are critical for all individuals involved in any healthcare activity. For example, if a physician discusses a complex diagnosis with a patient or medical staff interacts with the insurance companies, they must communicate effectively to develop a clear mutual understanding. Therefore, potential applicants must possess competitive communication skills to interact effectively at different organizational levels in various communication styles. They also need to be comfortable while describing highly sensitive information in a completely professional way. Similarly, in times of emergencies where time is very crucial, the nurses must communicate clearly to deliver relevant information efficiently. Moreover, in some circumstances, while dealing with patients, nurses need to ask repeated questions and understand their responses carefully for precise assessments. Once they have received the assessment data, they need to communicate it with other healthcare staff who are also directly involved in the patients' care (Murphy, 2020).

Similarly, since nurses are engaged with patients for most of their time, they must describe the recovery (n) plans and medication (av) clearly and effectively to avoid any serious medical condition later. Also, when their families interact with nurses, they must be attentive to not only their medical needs but also their emotions to (v) formulate articulate, non-judgmental, and empathetic responses to their queries and concerns. Only in this way can nurses explain the necessary medications and their importance to patients and their families for speedy and effective recovery. It is also important to note that communication involves not only verbal communication but also written communication. Therefore, nurses must develop all kinds of communication skills while performing their diverse duties in the health care setting. However, effective communication is often accompanied by many other soft skills, such as compassion, patience, etc., as described in the following sections.

Compassion And Patience

Compassion is one of the soft skills most required by nurses, as, unlike other medical staff, they mostly work directly with patients who feel overwhelmed in hospitals, which are often considered stressful environments. Under such circumstances, they likely (v) become afraid of their health problems, easily angry with the poor medical facilities, or even frustrated with their health conditions. Therefore, in order to effectively respond to their negative emotional states, nurses must exhibit compassion in their behaviour while interacting with (pn) them (av) repeatedly during the day. In this way, the nurse's compassionate response to vulnerable situations patients can help them feel better, happier, and safer (Pattillo, 2013). This also contributes to the success of the nurses' careers, as patients will leave very positive feedback once they are discharged. Moreover, if nurses are compassionate with their (n) patients, they can develop very good personal relations with them and increase their job satisfaction. This ultimately (v) leads to continuous professional growth as a nurse.

Similarly, patience is also another important soft skill for nurses to deliver high-quality healthcare service. As explained earlier, the healthcare environment is often a source of anxiety, emotional disturbances, and frustration for patients; they often generate very unpredictable responses. So, in such situations, nurses need to be patient to help patients overcome their anxiety. It also helps nurses to develop tolerance, accept people as they are, and control the anger and stress that develop in reaction to patients' undesirable feedback. Patience is also important for a nurse while performing multiple tasks at the same time often develops very (aj) tense feelings, and as a result, nurses can become prone to many errors. Therefore, to effectively and efficiently cope with all such kinds of situations that cause mental restlessness and stress, observing patients can improve the performance of the nurses.

Flexibility, Adaptability, And Emotional Stability

The conditions of the healthcare sector are changing constantly due to technological revolution and globalization. This has further led to many social changes in the form of people's behaviour, attitudes,

and concerns regarding their health conditions. In response, patient care has become highly dynamic. Moreover, there are also many (n) challenges that the entire healthcare sector is facing in incorporating digital solutions and innovating existing healthcare practices. One such development is the electronic health care record and computerized medical checkups. All these changes require nurses to become flexible and adaptable to adjust themselves in the constantly changing environment. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the responsibilities of a nurse are very diverse, and they often have to perform multiple jobs simultaneously, such as quickly moving from an emergency room setting to performing a complicated medical procedure calmly. In such circumstances, nurses need to manage their (n) priorities and high workloads. Thus, nurses should always be prepared to face any uncertain situation (av) effectively and with resilience. This is also the primary characteristic of skilled nurses that most recruiters look for in applicants so that they can choose the best nurses who can easily fit in the existing setup and are always ready to adapt to any future changes (iCIMS, 2015).

Another important skill in this regard is emotional stability. In any service-oriented industry, the customers and the service providers are always engaged in direct communication. Therefore, it becomes crucial to comprehend the needs and feelings of the customers so that they can be addressed effectively. This becomes even (av) more important in the healthcare industry, where the patient's health is compromised in case of any negative emotional encounter. Therefore, nurses must develop emotional intelligence to sensibly perceive the patient's needs and develop healthy relationships with them. This will promote mutual respect and trust as well.

Honesty

Along with many other soft skills described above, honesty is another important skill that comes under work, as well as social ethics. Honesty is considered the best policy for developing mutual relationships in business and among social connections. However, in nursing, it is even more important as nursing professionals usually hold very sensitive information while dealing with patients. They also have to rely on other co-workers for a sufficient amount of information related to the same patients. So, effective team building and productivity in the workplace can only be ensured if nurses are honest with each other as well as with patients regarding all kinds of information they have. Therefore, nurses are required to exhibit a very strong tendency toward honesty and work ethics.

Moreover, when dealing with very sensitive patients, nurses must uphold integrity and always stay true to their words. Otherwise, it can bring a lot of emotional and professional consequences for them. For instance, if a nurse asks any patient if she will come after a couple of hours to reexamine him but intentionally does not come, the patient can develop a very frustrated and stressful condition of mind. In this regard, honesty is not only being truthful to others but also to ourselves as well. One can build a very (aj) positive and trusted character only if he remains true to himself and avoids any kind of lying or cheating with others in any situation. However, it is also necessary that nurses are emotionally intelligent and honest because sharing sensitive information straight away can bring

negative results.

Proactive, Ethical, And Responsible Nature

Medicine and health care are very respectful professions, and they play a very important role in the society and lives of the patients, while (pn) this profession demands more responsibility, ethics, and proactive behaviour of the professionals associated with this profession. Doctors and health care professionals, such as nurses, are like parents in the medical field, so they have to take huge responsibility. In the medical term, it is referred to as Medical Paternalism, which demands more dedication and responsibility from the doctors and nurses. This is more associated with the doctors because they make the decisions for the patient's sake and wellbeing. The patients are in a weak physical condition, and sometimes they face mental retardation, so they can't take decisions for themselves. Therefore, doctors should make decisions for (pn) their health and benefit.

Negligence has no place in the medical profession; therefore, doctors and nurses should be proactive and responsible for the patient's life. Healthcare professionals should deal with every patient without any discrimination because every patient deserves basic health rights. There are three requirements for the moral evaluation of medical personnel's behaviour. Whether they violate laws and administrative regulations, conform to recognized ethical principles and moral rules, or are of high moral character. Patients have the right to basic medical care, the right to self-determination, the right to informed consent, and the right to privacy. Moreover, the doctor should support the patients' decisions like Artificial Insemination, genetic counselling, and contraception.

Effective Team-Player

Collaboration and teamwork in the health profession are defined as the sharing of duties and responsibilities to ensure better health for the patients. In the medical field, healthcare officials work together with respect and mutual support. Health care is assessed through the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). The mutual collaboration between doctors and nurses leads to the success of the medical profession and avoids medical malpractice, which includes misdiagnosis and surgical errors. Every medical person is directed to follow the senior's guidance and work as a team without any conflicts (Pattillo, 2013). The medical profession and healthcare industry are governed by mutual collaboration and support as every person involved in the healthcare industry contributes their role to human health. Healthcare collaboration provides quality care, and the medical staff learns new techniques and effective methods to deal with the patients together.

Effective mutual collaboration contributes a lot to achieving medical goals. It has been analyzed in a study published in the American Journal that shows that teamwork is necessary for the health of patients. There are certain complex surgeries, like craniectomy, spinal osteomyelitis surgery, etc.,

that need the mutual work of the whole staff in the hospital to be successful. Apart from the doctor's role, nurses also make a major contribution to the health care system by providing effective support to seniors and patients. They have to perform basic but crucial tasks like providing the right medicine to avoid medicine liability, ECGs, Dialysis, mammography, etc. The nurses spend more time with the patients and are always available for their support and care. The nurses should accept the guidelines provided by the doctors and work efficiently as a team, considering their responsibility. The attributes of a responsible nurse include honesty, creativity, responsibility, and dedication to their job.

Strong Work Ethic

A strong work ethic includes the set of rules and disciplines that are implemented by healthcare officials and gives a strong notion that hard work and dedication to the work are the basic needs of any profession. In the medical field, strong work ethics are the most important factors that change the whole game and demand the commitment and dedication of medical practitioners. The medical profession demands professionalism and rigidity when it comes to decisions about the health of a patient. There are some dilemmas in the medical profession when the doctor has to control his emotions and other aspects to ensure the right medication and treatment. For example, Euthanasia is the painless killing of a patient who has been suffering from a very painful disease, and there is no hope for his survival or an irreversible Coma. In this situation, doctors have to avoid their emotions to help the patient get rid of the pain and suffering. A strong work ethic ability is needed to undertake such a harsh decision by controlling emotions. Besides, work ethics also includes maintaining credentials, the privacy of the patient, and accepting the fatality of the patient.

In a healthcare office, the job demands a professional demeanour rather than negligence or being distracted or frustrated. Healthcare professionals need to learn how to ignore their issues for a while to ensure better care for the patients. On the other hand, if the doctor behaves like he is not mentally active, then it may also lead to serious issues for the patients. However, some patients also suffer from mental health diseases like PTSD, schizophrenia, or bipolar diseases, so such patients are very difficult to handle, and they can also harm doctors and nurses.

Time Management

Time management becomes an essential skill while doing multiple tasks simultaneously (Aggar et al., 2018). It not only means getting things done on time but also prioritising tasks and meeting deadlines effectively. Therefore, nurses, as well as other medical staff, must manage their time efficiently while working and interacting with patients and among themselves. An important strategy in this regard is to schedule the tasks that need to be performed on a particular day and then execute them one by one, along with recording the progress. This habit will also help nurses to explore different areas of improvement and bridge them with more dedicated efforts. However, it is also possible that nurses can face several uncertain circumstances, such as medical emergencies. In such situations, it is not

effective to stick with the pre-planned activities but to incorporate all unforeseen things in such a way that they do not disturb the entire schedule of the day. Again, it is about prioritizing tasks and meeting deadlines (Aggar et al., 2018).

An important effect of time management is on the nurses' self-confidence and control. As they efficiently perform more and more jobs, they become confident in handling uncertain situations as well, which otherwise causes stress and confusion. They also become more creative and excellent problem solvers when they become efficient in time management. Gradually, after practising time management skills, nurses can earn a good reputation among the medical staff and hence can grow their careers effectively. Healthcare managers should also promote time management skills and introduce different strategies and tools that can help nurses in this regard.

Conclusion

Soft skills are highly crucial for nurses to effectively interact with patients, their families, and other medical staff for their successful performance in a healthcare setting. Because they can't manage emotional and sometimes difficult situations, they have to face healthcare without having these personal characteristics. Therefore, it is the (aj) primary responsibility of the management to evaluate the applicants not only based on hard skills such as their technical experiences but also based on soft skills that include excellent communication skills, empathy, work ethics, etc. The nurses' soft skills are the fundamental determinant of the positive or negative experience of patients and their families in the hospitals and, thus, their reputations. However, the soft skills described above are not the only essential skills; instead, there are many other soft skills as well. Therefore, as a nursing professional, one must explore and develop all these necessary skills for (on) his/her successful service delivery.

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