

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

Nursing Leadership

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## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

### RN-Clinical Supervisor

Nursing serves an important role in the healthcare industry. Nurses all have different educational backgrounds and specialties and collaborate together with other healthcare professionals to provide the best patient care available. Not all nursing roles are the same; some are focused on bedside care, or serve in education, while others take on leadership roles such as management. Regardless of the outcome, all nurses' main focus is on enhancing patient wellbeing through skill and art.

For my interview of a nurse manager or leader I selected Janelle Blossigham RN. Janelle is a clinical supervisor at Manistee Medical Care facility and has been in this current position for only a year. This is her first experience in nursing leadership, and she states she finds great satisfaction in this particular role. Janelle has been a nurse since 2006, and graduated from West Shore Community College. She also has an associate's degree in liberal arts. She does not have her Bachelor's in nursing, but is planning to start classes this fall to complete her degree requirements. Janelle has an extensive history with the geriatric population, and started working in extended care when she was sixteen years old. After completing her nursing degree she worked on a medical surgical floor at Hurley hospital in Flint, before returning to Northern Michigan and returning to her prior employer from her high school years at the long term care facility. She states it is unusual for an associate prepared nurse to have a position in leadership, but because of her geriatric experience the facility did hire her in with the request that she complete her BSN.

As a clinical supervisor in long term care Janelle is responsible for multiple tasks. She oversees all licensed and unlicensed staff, creates work schedules that must be fitted into budgeted hours, and is responsible for wound care management of the entire facility. Janelle

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

likes to think of herself as the ultimate resource for nursing staff. Most employees go to Janelle with questions on appropriate interventions to be implemented, or questions on documentation. She does state the demands of the nurse supervisor weighs heavily on staff needs. If the staff is not functioning correctly, then the patient isn't receiving the best care available.

## Cultural Diversity

### Challenging Biases

Leading and managing cultural diversity in an organization means managing personal thinking and helping others to think in new ways (Yoder-Weise et al pp.161). There are not many different races in the medical care facility, and the majority of residents and staff are white. There are a few residents that are Native American, and a few that have been of Mexican decent in the past. She states that racism is not an issue, but rather staffs attitudes toward residents can at times be negative. Due to the fact that Manistee is a small town it is often easy to recognize people's last names and know more personal history of residents because of the size of the community. Some staff easily judges the resident, or even other staff members because of a link to a family or church group. Often times Janelle hears things said about residents if they come from a less than popular family in the area. For example, "Oh, I don't want to take care of Mr. Jones. Don't you remember when he beat his wife so badly, and those poor kids used to raise chaos in school". Such remarks like this are often common, and Janelle finds it's challenging to have staff not judge on rumors and past history. This type of judgment can easily pass for prejudice behavior. Diversity not only involves how people perceive themselves, but how they perceive others. Those perceptions affect their interactions ([www.multiculturaladvantage.com](http://www.multiculturaladvantage.com)).

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

The best way Janelle handles issues such as this is continuing staff education. She often reminds staff that regardless of the patient's history, it is not professional to reflect on personal opinions that can alter patient care. She also asks staff to reflect on their own personal feelings and biases. If staff is more aware of how they feel, then they are more aware of how they treat their residents. Perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity to succeed in the workplace. Ineffective communication of these key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork, and low workplace morale ([www.multiculturaladvantage.com](http://www.multiculturaladvantage.com)).

## **Ethics**

### **Difficult Solutions**

The registered nurse integrates ethical provisions in all areas of practice and can be measured by maintaining patient confidentiality, and promoting patient advocacy (ANA, 39). Ethics can be a difficult subject for anyone. It is hard to do the right thing when the right thing isn't clearly defined.

In ethics there are no right and wrong answers, just better or worse answers, and nurses seek mentorship and counseling from nurse managers when they encounter difficult situations. Thus nurse managers must have a deep understanding of ethical principles and their application (Yoder-Weise et al pp.89). Nursing ethics involve nursing theory which both seeks to provide a collaborative relationship with the person in care. Themes that emphasize respect for the autonomy and maintaining the dignity of the patient by promoting choice and control over their environment are commonly seen (McHale, 2003). Janelle states that as a nurse supervisor she encounters ethical situations often. The majority of the issues stem from resident rights. In the example given Janelle states that one resident in particular has difficulty participating in daily

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

care activities. This resident often refuses baths, taking medications, and participating in therapy and lashes out on staff both physically and emotionally when encouraged to do so. Due to her rights she does not have to participate in any activity, and has the right to refuse medications. When she does take her medication she is often more calm, cooperative, and willing to work with staff. It was brought to Janelle's attention that staff has been "sneaking" her medications in her food without patient knowledge in attempt to keep her behaviors under control. This is a violation of patient rights because she often refuses her medication and if she refuses them the staff crushes them up and hides them in her food. Janelle can understand that the intentions of staff are to produce positive outcomes for this patient, but the way she is being treated is dishonest. Janelle did educate to staff that it is not acceptable to put medication into resident food without their knowledge because it is a violation of their rights, even if the result would benefit the resident. Staff was resistant to the request because they stated she is not of her sound mind and does have a DPOA that stated it was acceptable to crush her medications. This situation is very difficult to manage because there are no perfect answers, but just because the resident has a DPOA does not mean that her rights as a resident are taken away.

## **Power and Influence**

### **Teamwork**

Power and influence is key elements of leadership positions. Any leader with a sense of power can use influence to create a positive work environment. If a nurse is able to influence other such as staff, other healthcare professionals, or the community, she or he has the ability to make changes that better the outcomes of patient care. Janelle states that often we she thinks of the concept of power she cringes. She states that she has had nursing managers in the past that

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

took their power too far and used it to make themselves feel more secure and that it didn't help the staff. She learned from these managers that power and leadership should not be taken in vain, but rather utilized to benefit the healthcare team. Janelle treats her nursing team with respect and expects respect in return. She likes to make her staff feel they have the right to express their feelings with her as well as their thoughts, and ideas without consequence. Janelle feels one of her best attributes as a leader is to make herself available to staff. Janelle states she dislikes managers and other supervisors that hide behind their desks all day and demand things from staff without any concern for the requests they have made. She states "I am right out there on the floor with my staff. I work side by side with them when we are short, or when someone is falling behind with an increased workload. I am visible to the staff, and interact with them daily, and I think that it makes me more approachable as a leader. My staff is also more willing to implement my requests because I have built a better morale with them. I think teamwork is the best way to get any job done, and I make sure my nursing staff understands that I am an active part in patient care".

### **Problem Solving**

Good problem solving skills involves good critical thinking skills, and decision making processes. The effective leader can anticipate problems and develops methods for dealing with them (Yoder-Weise et al pp.107). A nursing leader must have the skills to anticipate potential problems, and be prepared for a solution. Janelle recalls that problem solving is something that she does each and every day. Rather it is short staffing, or the inability to perform job duties for lack of equipment it is always something. She states the best way to problem solve is to think ahead and always be prepared and have a game plan. As for the decision making aspect, she

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

states typically the decision will always be made in the best interest of the patient. If it benefits the patient, that decision will be implanted to provide the best outcomes.

### **Resolution of Conflict**

Everyone is a critic, and everyone, equally, is prone to criticism from time to time. Be it constructive or not, how you react to it is astronomically more important and telling of your character than the criticism itself (Mirigahri, 2009). Accepting criticism can be a positive experience. When attempting to resolve conflicts Janelle reminds both parties to not be defensive but to actually listen to what the other person is saying. She also reminds each party involved to listen to the opposing view and attempt to learn something new from the different point of view. If necessary she will meet individually with the people in conflict, and get both sides of the story. Then as a group they work together to find a solution. If communication is clear and concise usually a better solution is made. She praises teamwork, and communication exercises with her staff. They have team meetings every first of the month when staff and management collaborate on the productivity of the facility. They play team building games that are fun and boost employee morale as well as review steps of good communication technique.

### **Research**

Research is important to the nursing field because it helps make it a profession. Research helps advance patient interventions creating better outcomes. Research becomes an avenue for evidence based practice which is important because it gives sound rationale for nursing actions. Janelle states that she does not involve herself on any research committees, but often uses the

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

nursing educator as a resource for questions regarding appropriate nursing outcomes and interventions. She states the nursing educator often holds in-services on changing protocols because of new evidence based research information. She often relies on the educator for current updates, but also keeps current through nursing literature.

## Nurse Leader/Management Roles

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