

Reflections on Time Management in the Nursing Field

Reflexiones sobre la administración del tiempo en el área de la enfermería

Reflexões sobre o gerenciamento do tempo na área de enfermagem

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Abstract:

Time is a valuable asset that must be used correctly and cautiously. Time management improves professional performance through analysis and planning. The health sector is one of the fastest undergoing changes and innovations around the world, so the health needs of individuals are increasingly varied and must be met quickly and efficiently. Health professionals, especially nurses, must keep up with these changes and strive to manage time in order to provide efficient and effective care. Staff nurses and nurse managers struggle to perform their various roles under the pressure of time. This article aimed to reflect on the importance of time management for nursing. It was determined that despite the notorious importance of time management for nursing, very little is done for nurses to develop knowledge and skills to better manage time. The nursing team can save time, extend the available time and avoid waste of time through efficient communication, adequate use of technologies, sufficient interaction with patients, division of labor, and knowledge of the routine of the unit. Administrators of health institutions and especially nurse managers should pay attention to the importance of training nursing professionals in time management. Therefore, nurse managers themselves must have the knowledge to better analyze situations and plan their tasks so that time is used effectively and efficiently. It is essential to use time correctly, because every second of life is part of a great fortune, and in the health field, a second can represent the difference that will save someone's life.

Keywords: Nurse Administrators, Nurses, Nursing Care, Time management, Training.

Resumen:

El tiempo es un activo valioso que debe usarse correctamente y con cautela. La administración del tiempo mejora el desempeño profesional a través del análisis y la planificación. El sector de la salud es uno de los que más rápidamente está experimentando cambios e innovaciones en todo el mundo, por lo que las necesidades de salud de las personas son cada vez más variadas y deben ser atendidas de manera rápida y eficiente. Los profesionales de la salud, especialmente los profesionales de enfermería, deben mantenerse al día con estos cambios y esforzarse por administrar el tiempo para brindar una atención eficiente y eficaz. Los profesionales de enfermería se esfuerzan por desempeñar sus diversos roles bajo la presión del tiempo. Este artículo tuvo como objetivo reflexionar sobre la

importancia de la administración del tiempo para la enfermería. Se determinó que a pesar de la notoria importancia que tiene la administración del tiempo para la enfermería, muy poco se hace para que los profesionales de enfermería desarrollen conocimientos y habilidades para una mejor administración del tiempo. El equipo de enfermería puede ahorrar tiempo, ampliar el tiempo disponible y evitar la pérdida de tiempo a través de comunicación eficiente, uso adecuado de las tecnologías, suficiente interacción con los pacientes, división del trabajo y conocimiento de la rutina de la unidad. Los administradores de las instituciones de salud y en especial los gerentes de enfermería deben prestar atención a la importancia de capacitar a los profesionales de enfermería en la administración del tiempo. Por lo tanto, las propias enfermeras gestoras deben tener el conocimiento para analizar mejor las situaciones y planificar sus tareas para que el tiempo se utilice de manera eficaz y eficiente. Es fundamental emplear correctamente el tiempo, porque cada segundo de vida es parte de una gran fortuna, y en el ámbito de la salud, un segundo puede representar la diferencia que salvará la vida de alguien.

Palabras clave: enfermeras administradoras, enfermeras y enfermeros, atención de enfermería, administración del tiempo, entrenamiento.

Resumo:

O tempo é um bem valioso que deve ser usado de forma correta e cautelosa. O gerenciamento do tempo melhora o desempenho profissional através de análise e planejamento. O setor da saúde é um dos que mais sofre mudanças e inovações em todo o mundo, por isso as necessidades de saúde dos indivíduos são cada vez mais variadas e devem ser atendidas de forma rápida e eficiente. Os profissionais de saúde, principalmente os enfermeiros, devem acompanhar essas mudanças e se esforçarem para administrar o tempo e prestarem um cuidado eficiente e eficaz. Profissionais de enfermagem se esforçam para desempenhar suas várias funções sob a pressão do tempo. Este artigo teve como objetivo refletir sobre a importância do gerenciamento do tempo para a enfermagem. Constatou-se que apesar da notória importância do gerenciamento do tempo na área de enfermagem, muito pouco se faz para que os esses profissionais desenvolvam conhecimentos e competências para melhor gerir o tempo. A equipe de enfermagem pode economizar tempo, ampliar o tempo disponível e evitar desperdício de tempo por meio de comunicação eficiente, uso adequado de tecnologias, interação suficiente com os pacientes, divisão do trabalho e conhecimento da rotina da unidade. Administradores de instituições de saúde e principalmente os gerentes de enfermagem devem atentar para a importância da capacitação dos profissionais de enfermagem no gerenciamento do tempo. Portanto, os próprios gerentes de enfermagem devem ter conhecimento visando melhor analisar situações e planejar tarefas para que o tempo seja utilizado de forma eficaz e eficiente. É fundamental utilizar o tempo corretamente, pois cada segundo de vida faz parte de uma grande fortuna e, na área da saúde, um segundo pode representar a diferença que salvará a vida de alguém.

Palavras-chave: enfermeiras administradoras, enfermeiras e enfermeiros, cuidados de enfermagem, gerenciamento do tempo, treinamento.

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Introduction

Time is one of the most valuable assets of human beings, so it must be used correctly and cautiously. Conceptualizing time is not an easy task. Time has several dimensions and its concepts differ between the historical and physical sciences⁽¹⁾ While Plato associated time with eternity; for Aristotle time is directly linked to movement, and for Saint Augustine, the past is a time that no longer exists and the future is a time that does not yet exist, but when conceptualizing time in this way the present also ceases to exist, since what a second ago was present has already become past and ceased to exist⁽²⁾ Thus, it is clear how conceptualizing time is an almost impossible task. The fact is that time cannot be stopped, and on many occasions, individuals are faced with the lack of this valuable resource to carry out all their daily tasks. It is not possible to stop time, but it is possible to learn to manage it.

Time management is completing work in the planned period⁽³⁾. Time management improves professional performance through analysis and planning⁽⁴⁾. Knowing how to use time is not enough to understand and apply time management principles⁽³⁾. To use time wisely, it is necessary to know what kind of problems will be encountered and also to recognize their causes. Based on this, individuals, who manage their time better, learn to improve their efficiency and reach success; therefore, managing time requires personal skills and determination⁽³⁾

Following the evolution of humanity, various sectors are rapidly renewed over time, one of the sectors in which more changes and innovations arise all the time is the health sector, so the health needs of individuals are increasingly varied and must be met quickly and efficiently⁽⁵⁾. Thus, time management has a fundamental value for health care workers, especially for the nursing team⁽⁶⁾. Nurses perform multiple functions in a time limited by the variety and severity of patients' needs; the urgency of such care; the need to deliver care without making mistakes; and shortages of medical supplies and human resources⁽⁵⁾⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾.

It is important to emphasize here the important role of nurse managers, who must know how to manage time, both to perform their administrative and care duties, as well as to guide other team members in the use of this scarce and, therefore, valuable resource, which is the time⁽⁴⁾. Despite the importance of time management for nursing, this subject is not properly discussed in the area⁽⁹⁾. Given the relevance of this topic, the present article aimed to reflect on the importance of time management for nursing.

Time management in the nursing field

Nursing is a science and an art, which encompasses direct and indirect care activities.⁽¹⁰⁾ Nursing professionals are caregivers, administrators, educators, and researchers, who need to manage their time well to perform all their functions⁽⁹⁾. The direct care activities performed by the professional cover the physiological and psychosocial dimensions of the patient, while the indirect ones involve interdisciplinary activities and administration of the care process, aiming to provide qualified care⁽⁵⁾⁽¹⁰⁾.

Studies carried out in different countries have shown that staff nurses spent more time on indirect activities than on direct care⁽⁵⁾⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾, that time management skills training may help improve the quality of care⁽⁹⁾, and that the ability to manage time is an important factor for the success of novice nurses⁽⁸⁾. Getting meaningful reports using tracking tools was pointed out as a great strategy to save time and reduce the risk of making medical errors, which means that developing clear and correct communication and keeping consistent notes about patients is important to avoid wasting time⁽⁸⁾. In addition, estimating workload; seeking help from other team members; sharing the tasks⁽¹³⁾, managing needed material and medicines; checking laboratory results; planning daily routine⁽¹²⁾, getting to work on time; interacting with patients at the beginning of the shift to determine their needs; routinely checking for new orders from physicians; predicting physicians' rounds; keeping track of treatments, exams, and discharges; being ready for shift change; and preparing for crises are other important factors for good time management⁽⁸⁾. It is also important that nursing professionals have time to rest, eat properly and socialize⁽⁸⁾⁽¹²⁾.

Nurse managers face time pressure all the time; tasks related to patient safety and satisfaction, planning and training of staff, interaction with other members of the healthcare team, and changes in procedures and health policies are some of the factors responsible for this pressure on nursing leaders⁽⁷⁾. A study conducted in Portugal pointed out that nurse managers spend more time performing activities related to patients' needs and evaluating the tasks performed by other members of the nursing team, and spend less time on tasks related to promoting the training and motivation of team members⁽⁴⁾. According to a study carried out in China, general self-efficacy, depression, experience in management, and self-control can be predictive factors of time management disposition among nurse managers⁽¹⁴⁾. Time management skills are believed to improve as nurse managers become more experienced⁽¹⁵⁾.

Nursing care must focus on the individual, thus a consistent relationship between the nursing professional and the patient/family/community must be developed.⁽¹¹⁾ Therefore, a therapeutic relationship must be kept to help individuals maintain or recover their health.⁽¹¹⁾ Thus, nursing professionals must be involved in a care process based on a scientific, holistic, and humanized approach. This whole process takes time to establish the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs of the individual who needs care. It is not possible to determine these needs being far away from the patient dealing with indirect care tasks.

When nursing professionals do not use their time correctly, both themselves and the patients are harmed. The quality of care decreases, as does the motivation of the nursing team⁽⁵⁾⁽⁹⁾. By not managing time properly, the nursing professional interacts less with the patient, pays less attention to the patient's psychosocial needs, often focusing only on the physical dimension of care, thus not offering holistic care and feeling dissatisfied as a professional⁽⁵⁾⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾⁽¹²⁾.

There is a need for actions to improve the skills of nursing managers to manage time and in this way encourage them to make efforts to increase the efficiency and quality of nursing management⁽¹⁴⁾⁽¹⁵⁾. Time management training should be included in continuing education courses for nursing professionals since a correct use of time during the development of their duties will make nursing team members more motivated and satisfied, which will positively reflect on the quality of care provided by them⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾⁽⁹⁾⁽¹¹⁾.

Emphasizing that time is scarce is not a solution to the pressures suffered by lack of time. In fact, there is no lack of time, as individuals every day have the same amount of hours, minutes, and seconds to carry out their tasks; there is a lack of planning. Based on this certainty, individuals must learn to use their time better. For nursing, a profession with numerous functions, time management is something that cannot be neglected. Greater importance should be given to the subject, both in educational institutions to prepare students for professional life and in healthcare institutions to help nurses develop skills to manage time, and, thus increase the quality of care.

Final considerations

Through this reflection, it was determined that despite the notorious importance of time management for nursing, very little is done for nurses to develop knowledge and skills to better manage time. Time management in health institutions brings benefits to the patient, the health professional, and consequently to the entire community, in addition to promoting the organization's credibility. The appropriate use of time can directly interfere with the quality of care and should therefore be evaluated as an important part of the care process. In addition, the correct use of time can help to reduce the dissatisfactions that consume the energy of the nursing team. Nurses can save time, extend the available time and avoid waste of time through efficient communication, adequate use of technologies, sufficient interaction with patients, division of labor, and knowledge of the routine of the unit.

This reflection is important to rethink nursing, not only concerning the number of different tasks that must be carried out in a short period of time but also to reflect on the time that the professional spends performing indirect care. Nurses should spend more time on direct patient care; they should receive training to better manage time, which would positively affect the quality of care, allowing the nursing team to be more satisfied and motivated while performing their duties. Administrators of health institutions and especially nurse managers should pay attention to the importance of training nursing professionals in time management. Therefore, nurse managers themselves must have the knowledge to better analyze situations and plan their tasks so that time is used effectively and efficiently. It is essential to use time correctly, because every second of life is part of a great fortune, and in the health field, a second can represent the difference that will save someone's life. This reflection is expected to promote new studies using different methodological designs to evaluate the importance of time management in the nursing field.

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