

SAFE NURSING PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

Delivering Care that conforms to the standards of practice for nursing protects both your patients and you. Legally, Nurses are held accountable to deliver care in a manner that any prudent nurse would render in the same or similar circumstances.

Nurses are involved in the provision of health care in every area of the health care system, 24 hours a day, and seven days a week. This presence of nurses and their sound knowledge base enables them to play a critical role in patient safety. To maintain a high standard of practice and protect against legal problems related to nursing care, the nurse should follow some of the principles when providing patient care.

FOLLOW THE NURSING PROCESS

The five steps of the nursing process are recognized as a universal approach to nursing practice. A failure on your part during any of these steps can lead to trouble

- Nursing assessment
- Nursing diagnosis
- Planning
- Implementation
- Evaluation

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ADMINISTER THE MEDICATION PROPERLY

Medication errors jeopardize patient safety and are all too frequent. Knowing the drugs you administer is a vital element in the nursing standard of practice for medication therapy.

Before giving an ordered medication, you must understand its purpose and actions, the dosage appropriate for your patient's condition, the administration route, possible adverse reaction and any contraindication.

When administering a drug, make sure you follow the traditional "five rights" of medication administration:

- Right patient
- Right medication
- Right dose
- Right time
- Right route (delivery method or site of administration).

MONITOR FOR AND REPORT DETERIORATION

According to the Nursing Process, the recognized standard of care calls for continually assessing your patient. Once you've performed an initial assessment, made a nursing diagnosis, and initiated a care plan, you must continue to evaluate his condition and communicate the effectiveness of his treatment. Worsening signs and

symptoms or a lack of response suggest that you need to modify the care plan.

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Besides informing a practitioner about your patient's current or changing condition, you need to clearly communicate with patients and colleagues at every point of patient care. Good communication skills are essential when:

- transferring your patient's care to another person
- speaking with and educating your patient
- Interacting with the patient's family or other visitors.

To ensure effective, comprehensive communication when you report on your patients condition or transfer care, remember the abbreviation **SBAR**

- **S** is for situation. (Identify the patient and why he was admitted.)
- **B** is for background. (Provide a brief and significant medical history, including any tests or treatment completed.)
- **A** is for assessment. (Describe the patients current conditions.)
- **R** is for recommendation. (Discuss the plan of care for the patient.)

DELEGATE RESPONSIBLY

When you establish a work assignment, you're still responsible for

the patient's care, and you must delegate appropriately and supervise the person carrying out the assignment.

The "five rights" for delegating to another caregiver provide an easy-to-remember guide: Right person, Right task, Right circumstances, Right direction, and Right Supervision.

DOCUMENT IN AN ACCURATE, TIMELY MANNER

Accurate, timely documentation in your patients' medical record is crucial for these reasons:

- The medical record is a legal document required by state laws and regulations.
- It's a means of communication between caregivers that ensures continuity of care.
- It's used for education and research.
- It's used to substantiate insurance reimbursement claims.
- It can be used as evidence in legal proceedings to establish whether or not the care rendered met the legal standard of care.

Failure to follow facility policy can result in inconsistencies; in turn, these may compromise patient safety and create legal problems if the record ends up in court. Regardless of how professional a nurse appears on the witness stand, careless documentation can make a profoundly negative impression on a jury.

KNOW AND FOLLOW FACILITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Institutional Policies and Procedures help to establish the nursing standards of care in an Institution. Policies and procedures were developed to protect patient confidentiality and to ensure the patient receives quality health care.

They also help a nurse avoid losing her license or facing malpractice suits. They also help a nurse to avoid losing her license or facing malpractice suits. Policy prohibits a nurse from performing any duty she has not been trained to do.

USE EQUIPMENT PROPERLY

As a nurse, you have a duty to make sure you have received adequate training on the equipment you use to provide patient care. You must understand the equipment's intended use, know how to operate it properly, and follow policies and procedures for

using it if they exist. Never try guessing how to use equipment.

CONCLUSION

By adhering to these principles of nursing care spelled out here, you help protect your patients, meet the standard of nursing care in your daily practice, and avoid legal problems.

REFERENCES

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