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Clinical Exemplar

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NURSING PROFESSIONALISM

Life is a precious gift that needs to be nurtured and cared for. We are all here to help one another to experience life at the fullest. I personally feel the inner need to help my fellow man obtain the highest level of wellness to experience a healthy life. I believe that individuals should be able to take care of themselves as much as possible to obtain this goal through education and preventative care.

As a young high school graduate, I agreed to live with my aging grandparents to care for them and their home. I could not fathom how that decision would alter my life course and plant the seeds of my future and the desire to become a nurse. This was in the 1980's and believe it or not their family care physician made house calls monthly or sooner if needed. My grandfather was confined to his bed at this time and soon developed a severe decubitus ulcer to his hip in which the bone eventually was exposed. My grandmother and I had no formal background to assist us in caring for him. Dr. Brown would come in and examine him and prescribe medications to assist with my grandfather's bedsores, confusion and insomnia. Never was it discussed that turning him frequently would benefit his healing and slow down the progression of his decubitus. A simple nursing intervention that was never touched upon by the physician.

After my grandfather's death, I began to read about nursing care of the elderly, and with the discussion of care tactics with my aunt, who had begun employment at the local nursing home, my hunger for patient care knowledge blossomed. How could Dr. Brown not give us the basic knowledge to prevent my grandfather's decubitus from occurring? I decided I would seek out knowledge to enable me to provide successful care of my grandmother.

Subsequently, I enrolled in the nearby community college to obtain my Associate in Nursing Science degree. Later I obtained my Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree as I continued to seek knowledge to promote my care of patients and be of service.

Thirty-two years later I find myself still passionate in my nursing career. As charge nurse in the Preadmission testing department, I not only feel obligated to stay current in my practice, but to promote further education and competency in my staff through servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf's leadership philosophy describes the servant leader's success in achieving results by attending to the needs of those they serve, first through service and then through leadership. Seeking my own professional development and promoting the same in my unit for staff has provided the framework for myself and staff to stay connected in current trends and practices in patient care that is evidence-based and best practice.

Advocating staff professionalism through leadership increases the ability of nursing to advance health and become a leader in change. The leadership role to facilitate innovative, evidence-based practice is one of sale agent, educator, and cheerleader. As a leader I must project a positive, enthusiastic, open attitude to staff to foster and grow their positive attitudes and desire to be innovative and interested in exploring and developing new ideas in patient delivery. In leading, my role is to facilitate and build staff's relationship between staff while maintaining an awareness of the relationships and themes to realize the avenues of direction I

must take. By developing my professionalism through seminars, higher education, networking, participation in evidence-based patient care changes, while exhibiting passion and enthusiasm, I present a positive role model for staff to follow and develop their professionalism. This will enable not only me personally, but staff as well, to develop creativity while exploring innovative solutions to patient care. Staff recognition and validation in participation and initiation of innovative approaches to patient care will be recognized and rewarded through peer recognition and the Career Advancement Program (CAP) to “cheer” them on to higher levels of innovativeness and professionalism.

I have always been a change agent and leader in my practice of patient care. I enjoy the aspects of leadership in my current charge nurse role, and equally enjoy teaching and mentoring moments. My greatest fear is that I am of the baby boomer generation and that my age may prevent me or limit me in shaping and leading the focus and delivery of innovative, evidence-based, passionate patient care for a long term. I do not want my role in this journey to end soon. Just as in nursing, as we look to the future and anticipate the direction patient care is and must go, so to do I look at my personal role in nursing and patient care that will surely evolve also.

Through the telling and revisiting of my pathway in nursing I have experienced a renewed passion for patient care and leadership. My professional development plan is to continue participation in my professional organization while actively seeking opportunities to keep current in my practice. Ongoing reflection of one’s own life story brings understanding of personal values, conviction, and assists in developing true leadership according to L. Murphy. I will continue to reread my own story and add to it to increase my self-awareness and self-regulation to become that true leader.

