Philosophy of Nursing

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Nursing is a profession that continuously involves growth and change in an individual. From the start of one’s journey, the values and ethics of nursing should not only influence one’s practice, but overall philosophy on well being for themselves and others. It is important to take a deeper look into what philosophy means and how one creates an individualized philosophy they can maintain throughout their career and life. Developing a philosophy is an important tool to guide one’s practice of patient care.

**What is a Philosophy?**

Philosophy is defined as “a particular set of ideas about knowledge, truth, the nature and meaning of life, etc.” and “a set of ideas about how to do something or how to live” (Merriam-Webster). Keeping this definition in mind, it is easy to understand the importance of having a set philosophy to help journey through life. A philosophy could be about a particular subject, or a person can develop one for himself or herself. A philosophy can be in a mission statement or an overall idea about the purpose and direction of a person, subject, or organization.

**Philosophies of Nursing**

The nursing profession has an ever-changing, situational work environment; therefore, having a philosophy is important for providing care. Nursing is very situational and having developed guidelines are important tools to use when making decisions and guiding practice. To help develop the fundamentals of nursing, philosophies were created to describe important roles and expectations. Nightengale, Henderson, and Watson are important theorists who philosophies and ideas have guided nursing practice for many years (Kozier & Erb, 2012). Many organizations in nursing have also developed philosophies that others can use as a reference. ANA states “Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families,
communities, and populations” (ANA, 2014). This statement is the organization’s idea of who a nurse is and what their purpose is. It is a standard of excellence nurses can reference to develop their practice. The ANA’s statement is only one example of a philosophy of nursing, and most organizations have their own that is slightly specific to their mission. These set philosophies can help nurses to develop their own personal statements they can use in their practice.

My Philosophy of Nursing

My journey of nursing has educationally just started however there are many things that have led me to this place. My past experiences have led me to develop a unique desire for nursing, and will also influence my philosophy as a nurse. My role as a nurse will be to increase patient health through an exceptional level of care in correlation with communication, education, and valuing a person’s dignity. I am a true believer in the importance of health as an overall state of well being. I will communicate and teach my patients the importance of mental, physical, and emotional health as interrelated parts that work together to impact the overall health. This holistic philosophy will guide me during my nursing journey and in patient care. I think it is important to stress to patients how all aspects of their health are important to overall well-being. I will use this philosophy in my practice and help educate patients on staying physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. I look forward to continuing my education in these areas and how I can further promote these aspects of health. I will strive to maintain a level of patient dignity and treat each person with respect. This is an important aspect of nursing because it will allow me to gain positive rapport and trust with my patients. Developing a strong level of communication with a patient can lead to increased care by having a better understanding of the patient.

Evidence Based Practice

Evidence based practice is “clinical decision making based on the simultaneous use of the best evidence, clinical expertise, and client’s values” (Kozier & Erb, 2012). Following this definition, as
evidence changes, so must practice. More and more research has been done compiling the importance of nursing as a holistic profession. In an article regarding this subject, the author discusses the integration of holistic nursing and medical nursing and the benefits it provides. There is clear evidence that holistic nursing is the best way to integrate many different aspects of health, including the body, mind, and spirit into one progressive goal of healing and health for the whole person and body (Sharoff, 2008). The American Holistic Nursing Association is a great resource for nurses with a holistic philosophy. The AHNA’s website discusses their philosophy, education, ethic theories, self-care, communication, environment, cultural diversity, and the caring process (Sharoff, 2008). The information provided from these two sources, as well as many others, can guide nurses in their practice by proven evidence of what increases patient care and well being.

**Intuition Based Practice**

Nursing is one profession where every day is different and each situation is specific to that individual in a nursing setting. The differences in each unique situation require nurses to make decisions based on each individual. In order to make the best decision for the situation, it helps for nurses to have guidelines for making decisions. Nurses can use their intuition in situations to help provide the best care. Nurses can use guidelines such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Erikson’s Developmental Stages to find out what can be done to increase the patient’s health. If nurses sense something else is wrong they can use effective communication to gain reports with their patients and help determine any underlying sources of a problem. Physical, mental, and emotional health all work together and it is important for all three aspects to be functioning properly to ultimately increase health.

**Clinical Experience**

Clinicals are excellent experiences for student nurses to develop their skills by working in a “real-life” situation. I have had the opportunity to complete hours at a local hospital and this time is an
invaluable opportunity for me to develop my practice. I used my philosophy of patient dignity of my role as a student nurse while caring for my patients. Providing daily hygienic care to my individual patients allowed me to spend some time with them, and increased their mood due to being refreshed. These basic aspects of nursing care ultimately gave me the time to establish a relationship with my patient and give them a sense of respect and dignity. Holistic nursing encompasses all aspects of physical, mental, and emotional health. In my clinical experience, it was important for me to portray this philosophy and teach my patients how important taking care of their whole self is. After gaining a positive relationship with my patient through effective communication and respect, I was able to help teach them about the ideas and theories of holistic healing to find ways they can incorporate health into their daily lives.

Conclusion

Philosophy has been and will continue to be an important aspect and driving force in nursing due to the nature of care. It is important to have a deep understanding of the elements of nursing and the different theories that play a role in providing patient care and increasing overall well-being. The values of a nurse should be reflected in practice and everyday life, and by determining a philosophy specific to the individual, it will help the nurse to consistently provide the best care to their patient.
References


