



The Outstanding Service of a Nurse Supervisor During COVID-19

By: Judith Bowling, PhD, MHA, MSN, RN-BC

ABSTRACT

Nurses are heroes but are often hesitant to use this title. Nurses stand at the center of the public health crises with the coronavirus pandemic, demonstrating courage, bravery, knowledge, and commitment, often putting themselves in harms' way while caring for and guarding their patients. Nurses respond to the call to care at every level, from the direct care nurses in hospitals to board members shaping national policies. One special category of nurses on the front line, administrative nursing supervisors, are experienced and dedicated nurses who exemplify the finest characteristics of nurses. This article relates the exploits of one nursing supervisor during the extraordinarily difficult time for health care workers during the coronavirus pandemic.

Keywords: Nurse supervisor, COVID-19, Coronavirus

INTRODUCTION

Nurses are heroes. Unaccustomed to the title, nurses often brush aside the accolades and continue their job as advocates and guardians for the patients. With the increased attention from the public, now is the time for their story to be told. Now is time to document and celebrate the phenomenal job nurses are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2020 was designated as The Year of the Nurse and Midwife by the World Health Organization (WHO). Since the times of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, nurses have demonstrated skills and fortitude caring for others during difficult situations. Nurses occasionally receive increased notice by the public, notably during natural disasters, such as tornados, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Nurses are also more noticed during public health crises, such as the Spanish flu, Ebola, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and the novel influenza A virus (H1N1) (Cipriano, 2020).

Nurses responded to the call to care during each of these crises, putting patients first with little regard for their own safety. The response of nursing to the current coronavirus pandemic is no different. Nurses have responded at every level to the pandemic crisis, from direct care nurses in hospitals to board members shaping national policies (Schwerdtle et al., 2020). This story re-

lates the actions of one nursing administrative supervisor who struggled during the pandemic to provide the best, compassionate care possible during a time of unprecedented healthcare challenges.

BACKGROUND

Administrative Nursing Supervisors are a critical and influential member of the healthcare team. This role encompasses a variety of duties which require extraordinary flexibility. Duties often include staffing decisions, responding to Code Blues (caring for patients with cardiopulmonary arrest), Code Rescue (patient is deteriorating rapidly), conducting staff meetings, and talking with patients and their families during difficult circumstances (family member's lack of improvement). Nursing supervisors have described the most vexing aspect of the job as the expectation that they "needed to be everything to everyone" (Morelock, 2020, p. 24). The administrative nursing supervisor is expected to remain calm, collected, and maintain professionalism throughout any situation, despite the intense demands of the job. This report highlights the outstanding service one nurse supervisor provided during the unparalleled public health crisis that had a substantial impact on patients and families.

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THE TALE OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE

Raul B., an administrative nursing supervisor, was experienced in dealing with difficult situations and patient complaints. Raul always demonstrated compassion, caring, and resolve the nursing supervisors at this hospital demonstrate daily. During the coronavirus pandemic, situations developed that supervisors had not encountered previously. Staffing issues, possible employee exposures, patient placements are just a few of the everyday duties that took on a greater significance. At times the nursing supervisors found themselves in situations that called for innovative thinking in order to resolve the issue. During a staff meeting, Raul heard about a new initiative that used iPads for family members to contact a patient in the hospital. This initiative was not yet in place but was expected to be in place soon.

A few days later, Raul faced a difficult situation as the nursing supervisor. At this time during the pandemic, in order to provide the maximum safety for employees and patients, visitors were not allowed on the nursing units. Raul was contacted by the daughter of a patient in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), pleading to see her mother. The patient was a grandmother with a large family who had never been separated from her family. Not only was she in ICU but she was intubated and, on a ventilator, leaving the patient unable to talk with her daughter. Raul recalled that iPads were available to assist with family visitations. Using this technology, he was able to help the daughter to see her mother and the patient was able to hear her daughter's voice, easing her distress.

Another opportunity presented itself within a few days. Raul received a call from a nurse in the Progressive Care Unit (PCU) about an upset family member. The son of a patient in PCU called because he was concerned about his mother. The patient had a history of cancer and stroke and the son was the legal guardian giving consent for all treatments. The son had spoken with the patient's physician and case manager and had been told, given the patient's current condition, he could visit his mother and bring her some personal items. Given this assurance, the son drove over 80 miles to see his mother. Once he arrived at the hospital, he was told at the door that he

could not go in to see his mother, confirmed by the nurse in charge on the unit. At this point, the son was very frustrated and asked to speak to an administrator.

Raul was the nursing supervisor on duty and was informed of the situation. He investigated the patient's case, reviewing the medical record then going to PCU and spoke with the nurse in charge on the unit. Busily engaged in the care of another patient at the time, the nurse agreed with Raul, facilitating a zoom meeting between the patient and her son. Often, things are not as simple as one might hope, and other obstacles emerge. The son's phone could not be used for the Zoom meeting, so another option had to be found. Raul secured one iPad from another department and together with the iPad from PCU, he was able to facilitate a face to face (via Zoom) meeting between the patient and two sons.

The patient's face absolutely lit up when she saw her sons and immediately her whole demeanor improved. The three family members were able to see and speak with each other and the sons could see the great care their mother was receiving. The son who drove so many miles to the hospital went from being frustrated and angry to being grateful for the level of protection the hospital was providing his mother. He could see and hear for himself how much better she was physically and mentally.

DISCUSSION

These types of circumstances bring to light the importance of allowing family members to connect with loved ones in the hospital. John Leland (2020) noted in the New York Times and Wakam, Montgomery, Biesterveld, and Brown (2020) noted that the greatest fear of almost all patients is dying alone. The impact of hearing and feeling from one's family members, having the love and support during such a stressful time, cannot be overemphasized. Situations such as these offer a special opportunity for nurses to share what could possibly be a loved one's last moments that might otherwise be lost forever. Nurses care for patients in a holistic manner and work hard to assure they do not get so involved in caring for the physical needs that the mind and soul are neglected.

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CONCLUSION

Although unaccustomed to the title, nurses are heroes and stories of their perseverance during the extraordinary public health emergency caused by COVID-19 should be celebrated. Since the times of Florence Nightingale, nurses have responded to crisis after crisis, at every level of emergency management, to help and care for others, often without recognition. During this pandemic, the public has acknowledged the vital role of nurses and this is the remarkable story of one nursing supervisor who answered the call with compassion and fortitude.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

AUTHORS

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