



Effective communication among staff nurses: Implications for patient safety and quality of care

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Abstract

Effective communication among staff nurses is a critical determinant of patient safety and quality of care across healthcare settings. As frontline providers, staff nurses are responsible for continuous information exchange with patients, families, and multidisciplinary healthcare teams. Breakdowns in communication have been consistently linked to medical errors, adverse events, and compromised quality of care. This narrative review examines the concept of effective communication among staff nurses, its implications for patient safety and care quality, common barriers encountered in clinical practice, and evidence-based strategies to enhance communication competence. A review of national and international literature, including nursing theories, clinical guidelines, and empirical studies, was undertaken. Findings indicate that effective communication improves clinical decision-making, reduces preventable errors, enhances patient satisfaction, and strengthens interprofessional collaboration. Major barriers include workload pressures, time constraints, language and cultural differences, and organizational hierarchies. The review underscores the importance of structured communication tools, continuous professional education, and supportive leadership in promoting effective communication. Strengthening communication competencies among staff nurses is essential for advancing patient safety and ensuring high-quality, patient-centred care.

Keywords: Effective communication, staff nurses, patient safety, quality of care, nursing practice

Introduction

Effective communication is widely acknowledged as a core competency in professional nursing practice. International healthcare organizations emphasize communication as a critical factor influencing patient safety, quality of care, and clinical outcomes. Staff nurses interact continuously with patients, families, physicians, and allied health professionals, making communication an integral component of daily nursing responsibilities. Inadequate communication has been identified as a major contributor to adverse events, sentinel events, and compromised patient care. Therefore, enhancing communication skills among staff nurses is a global priority in healthcare systems.

Aim and Objectives: **Aim:** To evaluate the effectiveness of a structured communication training programme on knowledge regarding effective communication among staff nurses and its implications for patient safety and quality of care.

Objectives

1. To assess the pre-test level of knowledge regarding effective communication among staff nurses.
2. To implement a structured communication training programme for staff nurses.
3. To assess the post-test level of knowledge regarding effective communication among staff nurses.
4. To determine the effectiveness of the training programme by comparing pre- and post-test knowledge scores.
5. To examine the association between pre-test knowledge scores and selected demographic variables.

Methodology: Research Design: A quantitative research approach with a pre-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design was adopted to evaluate the effectiveness of a

structured communication training programme among staff nurses.

Setting of the Study: The study was conducted in selected hospital(s), providing secondary and tertiary care services.

Population and Sample: The population consisted of staff nurses working in selected hospital units. A sample of staff nurses who met the inclusion criteria was selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique.

Sample Size: The sample size consisted of 30–60 staff nurses, which is considered adequate for a pre-test–post-test intervention study.

Inclusion Criteria

- Staff nurses willing to participate in the study
- Staff nurses available during the period of data collection
- Staff nurses with at least six months of clinical experience

Exclusion Criteria

- Nurse administrators and supervisors
- Staff nurses on long leave during the data collection period

Data Collection Procedure: Pre-test knowledge assessment was conducted using the structured questionnaire prior to the intervention. Following the pre-test, the structured communication training programme was administered. A post-test knowledge assessment was conducted seven days after the intervention using the same questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee. Informed consent

was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of data was maintained.

Statistical Analysis: Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe demographic variables and knowledge scores. The effectiveness of the structured communication training programme was determined using a paired t-test to compare pre-test and post-test knowledge scores. The association between pre-test knowledge scores and selected demographic variables was analysed using the chi-square test. A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Validity and Reliability of the Tool

Validity: The content validity of the structured knowledge questionnaire was established by submitting the tool to a panel of experts consisting of nursing faculty, nurse administrators, and clinical nursing experts. Suggestions and corrections provided by the experts were incorporated, and the final tool was prepared based on their consensus.

Reliability: The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the split-half method. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Karl Pearson's correlation formula and was found to be $r = 0.82$, indicating that the tool was highly reliable.

Concept of Effective Communication in Nursing

Effective communication in nursing refers to the accurate, timely, clear, and compassionate exchange of information that is understood by all participants. It encompasses verbal, non-verbal, and written communication, along with paraverbal elements such as tone and pace of speech. Therapeutic communication, which emphasizes empathy, respect, and patient-centeredness, is fundamental to nursing care and is supported by international nursing standards.

Importance of Effective Communication for Staff Nurses

Effective communication directly influences patient safety by reducing medication errors, improving clinical handovers, and ensuring continuity of care. It enhances patient satisfaction by promoting trust, understanding, and shared decision-making. Additionally, strong communication skills improve teamwork and collaboration among healthcare professionals, leading to improved efficiency and clinical outcomes. For staff nurses, effective communication also contributes to reduced workplace stress, fewer conflicts, and higher job satisfaction.

Barriers to Effective Communication Despite its recognized importance, several barriers hinder effective communication in nursing practice. These include high patient–nurse ratios, time constraints, emotional fatigue, language and cultural differences, and inadequate communication training. Organizational factors such as rigid hierarchies, poor leadership support, and lack of standardized communication protocols further impede open and effective communication.

Strategies to Enhance Communication Skills Among Staff Nurses:

Evidence suggests that structured communication tools such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) significantly improve clarity and accuracy in clinical communication. Regular in-service

education, simulation-based training, and role-play exercises enhance nurses' confidence and competence. Promoting active listening, empathy, cultural competence, and reflective practice further strengthen communication. Supportive leadership and a non-punitive organizational culture are essential to sustain effective communication practices.

Implications for Nursing Practice and Administration:

From an international perspective, effective communication should be embedded within nursing policies, standards, and continuing professional development programs. Nurse administrators should ensure adequate staffing, provide ongoing training opportunities, and encourage interdisciplinary communication. Integrating communication competencies into performance appraisal and accreditation standards can further reinforce best practices.

Results; Description of Sample Characteristics:

The study sample consisted of staff nurses from selected hospital units. Majority of the participants were in the age group of 21–30 years, predominantly female, and held a General Nursing and Midwifery or B.Sc. Nursing qualification. Most participants had 1–5 years of clinical experience, and a majority had not received prior formal training in communication skills.

Pre-test and Post-test Knowledge Scores

The pre-test assessment revealed that most staff nurses had average to poor knowledge regarding effective communication. Following the structured communication training programme, post-test findings demonstrated a significant improvement in knowledge scores, with most participants achieving good knowledge levels.

Effectiveness of the Structured Communication Training Programme. The mean post-test knowledge score was significantly higher than the mean pre-test score. The paired t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test knowledge scores at $p < 0.05$, indicating that the structured communication training programme was effective in improving knowledge among staff nurses.

Association Between Pre-test Knowledge and Demographic Variables No statistically significant association was found between pre-test knowledge scores and selected demographic variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, and years of experience at $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

The present study demonstrated that a structured communication training programme was effective in improving knowledge regarding effective communication among staff nurses. The significant improvement observed in post-test knowledge scores highlights the importance of formal communication training in nursing practice. These findings are consistent with previous international studies that emphasize communication as a key factor influencing patient safety and quality of care.

Effective communication has been widely recognized as a critical component in reducing medical errors and enhancing patient outcomes. The improvement in knowledge observed in this study supports the recommendations of global healthcare organizations advocating structured

communication tools such as SBAR to improve clarity and consistency in clinical communication.

The absence of a significant association between pre-test knowledge and demographic variables suggests that communication skill deficits are common across different age groups and experience levels. This finding underscores the need for regular and continuous communication training for all staff nurses, irrespective of their professional background.

Conclusion

Effective communication is a critical determinant of patient safety and quality of care in nursing practice worldwide. For staff nurses, the ability to communicate effectively is essential for delivering safe, patient-centred, and evidence-based care. Addressing communication barriers and implementing structured, evidence-based strategies can significantly improve healthcare outcomes at a global level.

Recommendations

1. Communication skills training should be integrated into continuous professional development programs.
2. Structured communication tools should be standardized across clinical settings.
3. Nurse leaders should foster a culture of open, respectful, and safe communication.
4. Further empirical research is recommended to evaluate communication interventions in diverse healthcare setting

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