Foundations of Nursing: Concepts, Skills, and Applications for Practice

Chapter 7: Communication

Communication Skills

Communication is the foundation of patient care. Effective communication helps nurses establish rapport, gather patient information, and provide care. Nurses must be aware of multiple communication skills, including active listening, effective questioning, and nonverbal communication. These skills are important for building trust and promoting patient-centered care.

Active Listening

Active listening is listening with an open mind and without planning a response. Nurses use active listening skills to hear patients' concerns, understand their perspectives, and respond appropriately. Active listening involves paying attention to the patient's words and nonverbal communication, summarizing what the patient says, and asking clarifying questions.

Effective Questioning

Effective questioning encourages patients to share information and express their feelings. Nurses use open-ended questions to gather information and close-ended questions to confirm patient understanding. Open-ended questions begin with prompts such as “What is your biggest concern?” whereas close-ended questions require specific answers, like “Have you tried taking the medication?”

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication includes facial expressions, voice tone, eye contact, and body language. Nurses must be aware of the patient's body language to interpret their feelings and respond appropriately. For example, if a patient is uncomfortable with body contact, nurses should avoid physical contact unless explicitly approved by the patient.

Barriers to Communication

Barriers to communication can impede effective patient care. These barriers include language differences, lack of privacy, and patient fatigue. Nurses can minimize these barriers by using clear and concise language, providing a quiet environment, and taking breaks to allow patients to rest.

Documentation

Documentation is a critical aspect of communication. Nurses document patient information to ensure accurate and efficient patient care. Documentation helps nurses track patient progress, plan care, and communicate effectively with other healthcare professionals.

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Policy

The introduction to this textbook focuses on the importance of effective communication in patient care. It highlights the need for nurses to actively listen, ask open-ended questions, and observe nonverbal cues. The chapter provides practical strategies for improving communication skills and identifies common barriers to effective communication. It also emphasizes the importance of documentation in ensuring patient safety and maintaining accurate records.