



ORIENTATION TO WORKING IN A NURSING HOME FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

An Orientation Guide for Foreign Nurses
in Nurmikoti

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this functional thesis is to create an orientation guide in English for foreign nurses coming to work in Nurmikoti. The orientation guide will help in creating an easier transition into the new work environment, hence promoting the quality of patient care and enhancing patient safety.

In the thesis, the concepts of multiculturalism and communication are explored. A literature review was conducted on the objectives of the orientation process and how orientation can be effectively carried out. The guide contains information on the principles of medication administration, patient safety and emergency procedures.

In order to enhance orientation, further research is recommended on the orientation needs of foreign nursing students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences as regards adapting to the new work environment, and on how these needs could be met.

Key words: foreign nurse, orientation, multiculturalism, communication.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Orientation is the process of adjusting to new circumstances, surroundings and/or facts. In health care, it is critical in the recruitment and retention of nursing staff. It also enhances the nurse's skills and knowledge (Charleston, Hayman-White, Ryan & Hapell 2007, 25). Orientation may provide the first opportunity to increase awareness, establish a mindset of inquiry, and empower nurses with practical tools to promote safe behaviour. Due to continuous changes in health care, orientation must reflect these changes as well. Attention should be paid to the needs of nurses and the content of orientation should meet those needs (Sims & Bodnar 2012, 7).

Globalisation and multiculturalism are unchangeable developments that have to be dealt with. Health care providers need to adapt to meet these new demands. 'Intercultural competence' is the attitudes and skills needed to effectively function in multicultural environments despite the cultural differences between healthcare providers or between patients and healthcare providers (Graham & Norman 2008, 190-191).

The ability to be sensitive to the values, beliefs and practices of the patient's culture is called cultural awareness (Merrington 2006, 2-3). Cultural aspects such as beliefs about the causes of diseases, pain relief, telling the truth, decision making, moral codes, and religious beliefs and practices can affect the interactions between patients and their caregivers (Laws & Chilton 2013).

Communication, which is an important tool in providing healthcare services, is a major challenge for nurses in a multicultural society, where misinterpretations of language may occur due to words having different meanings in different cultures (Merrington 2006, 3). In a study conducted in the UK, foreign nurses stated that most of their problems with verbal communication were more directed at the difficulty of understanding the resident's accent rather than their own verbal language skills (Stuart 2012, 662). Words used in different languages are not always easy to explain or interpret (Graham & Norman 2008, 193).

Nurmikoti is a nursing home located in Tampere, Finland. There are health care staff from different parts of the world employed there, who do not have Finnish as their first language.

This is a functional thesis, with an orientation guide as a product. An orientation guide in English will aid foreign nurses in an easier integration into the working culture of Nurmikoti. The product of this thesis is written in collaboration with the author of the thesis “Facilitating Orientation: An Orientation Guide for Foreign Nurses Coming to Work in Nurmikoti Nursing Home”

2 PURPOSE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this thesis is to create an orientation guide for foreign nurses who are non-native Finnish speakers coming to work in Nurmikoti. The aim is to provide a tool to enhance/ improve the orientation process for new foreign nurses. The ultimate goal is to create an easier transition to the new work environment and to improve and promote patient care.

The tasks of the orientation guide are to explain the following questions:

- What kind of nursing care is provided at Nurmikoti?
- What do foreign nurses need to know when they come to work in Nurmikoti?

3 NURMIKOTI

3.1 Information about Nurmikoti

Nurmikoti is a service home situated in Aitolahti in Tampere, Finland. It was founded in 1956 as a retirement home. Its mission is to provide high quality health care for the residents. The organisation incorporates the natural environment in order to provide residents with a close-to-natural lifestyle as opposed to institutional living. (Nurmikoti 2014.)

Since its establishment, two additional wings have been built. It currently has 37 rooms and each resident has his/her own private room with a bathroom. Each resident has the opportunity to decorate his/her own room according to his/her own wishes and taste. Visitors are welcome to see their loved ones at any time of the day, and the institution provides guest rooms which out-of-town relatives may stay in. (Nurmikoti 2014.)

3.2 Ideology and spirituality in Nurmikoti

Nurmikoti is run under the governance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is an Evangelical Christian denomination. According to Suomen Adventtikirkko (Seventh-day Adventist Church in Finland), the Adventist Church believes in God and follows the teachings of the bible. The holy day – Sabbath - is observed weekly on Saturdays. (Suomen Adventtikirkko 2014.)

The ideology of Nurmikoti is based on Christian values, humanity and human care. A holistic approach to care is used where the residents are encouraged and empowered to be self-reliant. Each resident's needs are considered individually and approached in a safe manner and with empathy. (Nurmikoti 2014.)

4 THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS

4.1 Multiculturalism and migration

A person moving from one country to another is called an immigrant. According to the Maahanmuuttovirasto (Finnish Immigration Services) registration centre, at the end of the year 2013, the number of foreigners living permanently in Finland was over 208,000 and was expected to rise in the coming years. (Maahanmuuttovirasto 2013.)

4.1.1 Acculturation

Acculturation is a process that immigrants encounter prior to assimilating into the host country's culture, and it calls for the adoption and release of attitudes and behaviours of both the host culture and the immigrant's own culture. (Emerson 2008, 47 & 91.)

Factors that affect acculturation include the immigrant's length of stay in the host country, his/her age on arrival at the host country, generational and socio-economic status, and ethnic identification. (Emerson 2008, 47.)

When the process of acculturation has been successful, foreign nurses have been more satisfied with their work and personal lives. This leads to an increase in the retention of foreign nurses in the workplace, which in turn aids in giving better patient care, hence improving patient outcomes. (Emerson 2008, 91.)

4.1.2 Cultural competence

Cultural competence has been defined as being sensitive towards other cultures including one's own cultural and ethnic beliefs (Cowan 2006, 83). It is the adaptation of care in a way that is consistent with the patient's culture. In health care, it is viewed to be a continuous process in which nurses aim to achieve the ability to effectively work within the cultural context of the patient. (Buscemi 2011, 41.)

Attributes of cultural competence include cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, cultural sensitivity, and cultural skills (Cowan 2006, 83). In order to be able to provide culturally competent care, one has to know and understand his/her own values, at the same time acknowledging the values of others (Maze 2005, 549).

According to Maze (2005), the goals for providing culturally competent care are to recognise differences in individuals, advocate for the marginalised, and have no tolerance for stereotyping and unfairness in healthcare (Maze 2005, 549).

The promotion of cultural competence has been increasing among health care providers in response to the needs of the expanding multicultural societies all over the world (Graham & Norman 2008, 190-191).

Foreign nurses need to understand the importance of the health beliefs of their patients, since health has many social and cultural interpretations due to individual perceptions and social influences. This is important to understand especially due to an increasingly globalised society where caring for people with different health beliefs has become the norm. The challenge for the health care providers is to find out these health beliefs and plan care that works with them. (Graham & Norman 2008, 190.)

4.1.3 Transcultural nursing

Cowan (2006) defines transcultural nursing as an area of nursing focusing on the comparative study and analysis of different cultures and subcultures in nursing. It aims at generating scientific and humanistic knowledge in order to provide culturally specific and culturally universal nursing care. (Cowan 2006, 84.)

The goal of transcultural nursing is to find out relevant facts about the patient's culture and hence provide culturally appropriate and culturally competent care. However, nurses need to realise that not all people from the same culture group think and behave in the same way. They should therefore be able to give culturally competent care according to each individual's needs. (Giger & Davidhizar 2004, 8.)

4.2 Communication

According to Merrington (2006, 3), communication represents an important tool in providing health care services and is considered a major challenge for nurses in a multicultural society. The profession of nursing depends a great deal on clear and accurate communication, because it ensures the safety of patients and the outcome of care. (Newton, Pillay & Higginbottom 2012, 537.) Moreover, the nurse-patient relationship relies heavily on communication and the ability for both parties to share a common understanding (McCarthy, Cassidy, Graham & Tuohy 2013, 335).

4.2.1 Ineffective communication in nursing

Language problems are unavoidable when foreign nurses are recruited into a new workplace. These problems need to be addressed during the orientation period. (Magnusdottir 2005, 268.) A barrier is instantly formed when the patient and nurse do not share a common first language. The barrier impedes the communication with the patient about his/her situation, treatment and care (McCarthy et. al. 2013, 335). According to El-Amouri and O'Neill (2011), it is recommended for the foreign nurse to be able to speak the patient's language at least at a basic level and understand appropriate body language relevant in the culture. The foreign nurse also needs to acquire some know-how on the new culture and language in order to have good communication and hence provide good care to the patient (El-Amouri & O'Neill 2011, 242).

Despite foreign nurses learning the new language, they encounter problems when their fluency is overestimated. This is because they still need to learn the nuances of the language, and also their comprehension and vocabulary may be more limited than others seem to realise. (Magnusdottir 2005, 266.)

In health care, ineffective communication has been seen to cause inadequate and negligent patient care and misunderstandings among the healthcare team. This can lead

to misdiagnoses, and the nurse-patient relationship suffers greatly, which ultimately leads to poor patient care (El-Amouri & O'Neill 2011, 249).

4.2.2 Effective communication in nursing

In order for communication to be deemed as effective, it has to produce language that is appropriate and understandable in the needed context. One has to know what should be said, when it should be said, and how the message should be delivered, either in a formal or an informal way. One has to also know what vocabulary to use and one should be able to understand the context, including having a level of pragmatic competence (the ability to understand what is meant without it being plainly or obviously stated). This also includes non-verbal communication, like the use of gestures, facial expressions, and the concept of personal space (Hearnden 2008, 50-51).

4.3 Orientation

Orientation is defined as the process of helping people to become familiar with something or some situation. (Oxford University Press, 2014) It is not meant only for the new employee, but may also include personnel who have been in the workplace for a longer period of time. Orientation should therefore educate the employees on what is expected of them in their current professional position, on the habits and routines of the work place, and on what to expect from their colleagues and other co-workers. (Penttinen & Mäntynen 2009, 2.)

4.3.1 Objectives of orientation for nurses

The orientation process aims at providing the employee with a new basis to carry out his/her duties at work, in cooperation with the requirements of the workplace (Penttinen & Mäntynen 2009, 3).

In nursing, the orientation process aids in the transition of the new employee to the new environment. The orientation process is therefore seen to have succeeded when it promotes nurse retention in the workplace. This retention is largely due to the

employees' satisfaction in their current job, which in turn is greatly influenced by how they are received, and their orientation to their workplace at the very beginning. (Robitaille 2013, 7 & Charleston, Hayman-White & Happell 2007, 25.)

When a new nurse joins an organisation, he/she needs to become familiar with the workplace culture, policies and procedures and also various protocols employed in that organisation. The orientation process also helps to gauge each new employee's level of competence and enhance his/her skills, knowledge and ability to perform the duties which he/she is hired to perform. (Robitaille 2013, 7 & Charleston, Hayman-White & Happell 2007, 25.)

4.3.2 Effective orientation

Orientation is considered effective when the employee is active and can work independently. The employee is therefore able to utilise the learned knowledge in various dynamic circumstances. Additionally, orientation is seen to have succeeded when the employee comprehends the ideology and doctrines of the workplace and has learned the general principles relating to the workplace and his/her own job. (Penttinen & Mäntynen 2009, 3.)

5 PATIENT CARE

5.1 Medication administration

Nurses are responsible and accountable for their role in medication administration and pharmacotherapy (Downie, Mackenzie, Williams & Hind 2008, 33). Pharmacotherapy means medication treatment by means of drugs. (Oxford University Press, 2014) Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö (the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland) has published a guide on pharmacotherapy to be used nationally called Safe Pharmacotherapy.

According to this guide, the Ministry of Education in Finland expects that nurses with qualifications from a University of Applied Sciences (UAS) should be proficient in their medication administration skills, in order to be able to carry out safe pharmacotherapy in accordance to the instructions from the manufacturer. The nurses should be able to administer medication using different routes, for example, orally, intramuscularly, subcutaneously, and intravenously. They should be able to observe and monitor the patient's condition and the effects of the medication used for their treatment. Moreover, the nurses should be able to perform medication calculations and educate patients on self-care. (Safe Pharmacotherapy 2006, 17.)

The guide also states that the Finnish National Board of Education expects that licensed practical nurses with basic vocational qualifications should be able to administer medication using various routes in addition to being able to distribute medication to the patient using the tray system. They too should be able to observe and monitor the patient's condition for any symptoms caused by the medication. (Safe Pharmacotherapy 2006, 17.)

5.2 Patient safety and the culture of safety

Patient safety has been defined as the prevention of harm to patients through errors of omission or commission. In the recent past, various healthcare agencies have been working on the promotion and improvement of the patient safety culture in healthcare settings like nursing homes and hospitals (Castle & Sonon 2006, 405).

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) is an independent non-profit organization that provides unbiased and authoritative health advice to decision makers in the private and public sectors. The IOM promotes the creation of a safety culture in all healthcare organisations. A safety culture is defined as “the product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies, and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organization’s health and safety management.” This culture is usually based on the organisation’s history, mission and goals and also includes its previous and current leadership. (Patient Safety and Quality... 13.)

Properties pointed out in a good safety culture are good leadership, teamwork, implementation of evidence-based practice, communication, continuous learning, patient- centred care, and a just culture where errors are addressed as system failures rather than individual mistakes (Sammer, Lykens, Singh, Mains & Lackan 2010, 157).

5.3 Emergency procedures

Emergencies can occur unexpectedly in the workplace. Emergency situations can disrupt the day to day operations of an organisation and also cause harm to the employees, customers and the public as a whole. These situations can either occur due to the forces of nature or be man-made. (How to Plan for Workplace... 1-2.)

According to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, it is important for employers to create an emergency action plan. The aim of the action plan is to organise, assign and point out actions that should be carried out by the employees during emergencies. Issues to be covered in the action plan include: how to report fires, evacuation policies and procedures, emergency escape routes, and rescue procedures. However, action plans should be tailored to the specific work environment and the possible emergencies that may occur in this environment (How to Plan for Workplace... 1-2).

In order for an emergency action plan to be carried out effectively, it is crucial for the employer to emphasise the need to protect lives and property in the event of an emergency to the employee. It is therefore necessary to educate and train employees on

what the proper actions are and how they should be carried out, hence reducing confusion when emergency situations occur. (How to Plan for Workplace... 2 & 6-7.)

6 METHODOLOGY

This is a functional thesis with a product. This type of a thesis is often used in Universities of Applied Sciences. The purpose of a functional thesis is to produce a product that guides, educates and organises professional practice. The product can be a leaflet, portfolio, book, CD, webpage, or an event or exhibition (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 9). The product for this thesis is an orientation guide intended for foreign nurses in a Finnish nursing home, and it is written in English. The material for the product was collected in collaboration and consultation with the working life connection.

A literature review is a comprehensive summary of the literature that is relevant to the research topic. It refers to a critical evaluation of the material and the understanding of what has already been written in the field. It presents the reader with what is already known in the field and identifies both traditional and recent controversies as well as gaps and weaknesses in the field. It discusses any similarities and differences between what has been found by the reader and what previous researchers have found (Whittaker & Williamson 2011, 26).

A literature review was carried out to define the key concepts of the thesis, and it was used to lay the foundation for the study. The tasks for the literature review include the identification, selection, critical analysis, and description of the existing information on the topic (Polit & Beck 2004, 88-111). The key words for this thesis are: multicultural nursing, foreign nurses, nursing, and orientation.

The material for the literature review was searched from the articles found in CINAHL and other relevant web pages such as Nurmikoti.fi (see references). The material used in referencing a thesis should be as new as possible. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 73.) The articles used in this thesis are from the year 2000 to date and peer-reviewed. Peer review is widely used and time-honoured in the scientific community for judging and improving a scientific or technical plan through documented critical evaluation by individuals with relevant expertise who have no involvement in developing the object being reviewed. Using peer review enhances the quality and credibility of a study (Committee on Research and Peer Review in EPA 2000, 99).

In nursing research, ethics must be applied to protect human rights (Polit & Beck 2008, 167). In accordance with the International Council of Nurses Code of Ethics (2012, 2) and in order for the nurse to promote an environment in which human rights, customs, values and spiritual beliefs of the patient and family are respected, the product of this thesis is written in a neutral and impartial voice.

Limitations for the study were a limited number of interviewees on topics covered in the orientation guide and the fact that no foreign nurses were interviewed. Hence, not all their views and needs were expressed in the guide. In addition, only one nursing home was considered for the study.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The topic for this thesis came up in a meeting with the director of the nursing home due to the increase in the number of foreign nurses employed in Nurmikoti. Particular areas to be covered in the guide were identified in a meeting with the director. As changes were implemented in Nurmikoti from a nursing home to a service home, more meetings were arranged and the author was informed of these changes. As mentioned earlier, the product of the thesis was written in collaboration with the author of the thesis “Facilitating Orientation: An Orientation Guide for Foreign Nurses Coming to Work in Nurmikoti Nursing Home”.

More research should be done on the specific needs of foreign nursing students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences during the orientation process in order to improve their orientation into the Finnish working environment.

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