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Interdisciplinary communication and collaboration: Physician, nurse and unlicensed assistive personnel

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Health care providers must effectively collaborate to meet complex and dynamic patient care needs in the hospital. Collaboration, however, is often challenging. Misunderstandings among physicians, nurses and unlicensed assistive personnel (UAPs) could contribute to the loss of valuable information and cause errors. The researchers conducted a qualitative phenomenological study in a metropolitan hospital. Valerie Malhotra's (1981) Schutzian lifeworld phenomenological orchestra study provided the theoretical foundation for the conductorless orchestra model, which guided the study. Physicians, nurses and UAPs have different positions in the health care orchestra when performing the musical score (patient-centered care). Each performer sees and hears the score from a slightly different perspective. The "we-relationship" in the orchestra study is a form of cooperation and collaboration in which each member calls upon their individual talent or stock of knowledge to interpret to musical score and successfully contribute to a seamless symphony performance. In some hospitals, there is a disconnection between the various orchestra members' (physician, nurses and UAPs) interpretations of the music (patient care). The objective of the study was to increase understanding of how to influence the various health care providers to deliver more collaborative care. Study results suggested that physicians, nurses and UAPs operate as separate entities most of the time and a hierarchical, subservient relationship exists, which creates a barrier to collaboration. To insure positive patient care outcomes in a hospital, the hierarchical professional structure must be addressed. Health care providers must learn to recognize, understand and respect each other's contributions to safe patient care.

Biography

Gwendolyn Lancaster is an assistant professor of nursing at Lehman College, NYC. She began her career with an associate degree from Pace University, NYC. She later obtained her bachelors in nursing, masters in nursing education, and a doctorate in educational leadership. She has 38 years of clinical experience in medical-surgical, critical care nursing and cardio-pulmonary step-down nursing and is certified in critical care nursing and 10 years in nursing education. She was a member of the New York State Nurses Association Board of Directors where she assisted in developing and promoting healthcare policies and legislation that promote safe patient care.

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