



Communication as a basic instrument in providing humanized nursing care for the hospitalized patient

Comunicação como instrumento básico no cuidar humanizado em enfermagem ao paciente hospitalizado

La comunicación como el instrumento básico en el cuidar humanizado en enfermería al paciente hospitalizado

Gilvânia Smith da Nóbrega Morais¹, Solange Fátima Geraldo da Costa², Wilma Dias Fontes², Alan Dionizio Carneiro³

ABSTRACT

Humanization is a term that is commonly used in association with technological resources and patient individuality, which considers patient's holistic and uniqueness needs. Humanization of nursing care has been emphasized in healthcare. Communication is a key factor that allows the healthcare team to understand the hospitalized patient's needs. Thus, there is a need to reflect upon the relevance of communication to provide quality humanized nursing care. Focusing on these aspects of nursing care, the objective of this bibliographic study was to describe the relevance of communication as basic instrument in providing humanized nursing care for the hospitalized patient. The study emphasizes the importance of communication as a fundamental component of humanized nursing care.

Keywords: Humanization of assistance; Nursing/organization & administration Communication

RESUMO

A humanização é uma expressão que vem sendo comumente usada no sentido de associação dos recursos tecnológicos ao reconhecimento da individualidade do paciente, compreendido como ser integral e ao mesmo tempo singular em suas necessidades. Considerando que a humanização do cuidado em enfermagem vem sendo bastante enfatizada nas instituições de saúde e que a comunicação permite à equipe compreender as necessidades do paciente vulnerabilizado pela doença e hospitalização, surge a necessidade de refletir a respeito da relevância da comunicação no processo do cuidar humanizado em enfermagem. Sob esse prisma, o presente estudo, de natureza bibliográfica, teve por objetivo destacar a comunicação como instrumento básico no processo do cuidar humanizado em enfermagem ao paciente hospitalizado. A partir desta pesquisa os autores ressaltam a valoração do processo de comunicação como componente básico na humanização do cuidado em enfermagem.

Descritores: Humanização da assistência hospitalar; Enfermagem/organização & administração; Comunicação

RESUMEN

La humanización es una expresión que comúnmente viene siendo usada en el sentido de asociación de los recursos tecnológicos al reconocimiento de la individualidad del paciente, comprendido como ser integral y al mismo tiempo singular en sus necesidades. Considerando que la humanización del cuidado en enfermería está siendo enfatizada en las instituciones de salud y que la comunicación permite al equipo comprender las necesidades del paciente vulnerabilizado por la enfermedad y la hospitalización, surge la necesidad de reflexionar respecto a la relevancia de la comunicación en el proceso del cuidar humanizado en enfermería. Bajo este prisma, en el presente estudio, de naturaleza bibliográfica, se tuvo por objetivo destacar la comunicación como instrumento básico en el proceso del cuidar humanizado en enfermería, al paciente hospitalizado. A partir de esta investigación los autores resaltan la valoración del proceso de comunicación como componente básico en la humanización del cuidado en enfermería.

Descriptores: Humanización de la atención; Enfermería/organización & administración; Comunicación

¹ Master, Professor of the Nursing Graduation Course, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande – UFCG – Campina Grande (PB), Brazil.

² PhD, Professor of Graduation and Post-Graduation Courses – Nursing Graduation Course, Centro de Ciências da Saúde (Health Sciences Center), Universidade Federal da Paraíba – UFPB – João Pessoa (PB), Brazil.

³ Postgraduate Student (Master) of the Nursing Post-Graduation Program, Universidade Federal da Paraíba – UFPB – João Pessoa (PB), Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

The hospital admission is perceived as an unpleasant experience by the ones who have to go through it, once it is permeated by the fear of what is unknown, by the usage of technological resources, often invasive and painful, by the usage of a technical and composed language, which increases the patient's anxiety related to his/her pathological picture, and the need to share the same physical space with a person who does not belong to his/her family environment, besides the concerns regarding his/her clinical evolution⁽¹⁾.

Additionally to such problem, the disease has become the core of the scientifically recognized knowledge in the health ambit, becoming even more important than the interest by the human being in which it is developed⁽²⁾. Based on this understanding, the patient is labeled by the disease he/she has, emphasizing its symptoms and prognosis, as well as an exaggerated valorization of the knowledge may be observed, in detriment of the fragilized human being carrying the disease.

During the process of getting ill and being admitted to a hospital, the healthcare team's attention is essentially given to the disease, not to the ill individual. Thus, each patient's individuality is silenced, with no space for a caregiving process which recognizes the patient's fears, insecurities, concerns, necessities, anguish and uncertainty. It does not even consider the patient's participation as an autonomous individual, who is free to express how he/she feels, perceives, and thinks about his/her condition⁽³⁾.

Therefore, in the modern world, humanization is a growing demand when trying to rescue the caring process as a process of respecting and valorizing the human being.

Humanizing means receiving the patient in his/her essence, as of an effective action demonstrated by the solidarity, the comprehension that the patient is a singular being and by the appreciation of life. It means that one should be open to the others, receiving with solidarity and legitimacy the diversity, making the environment more pleasant and less stressful, so as to provide the patient a safer, warmer and more tender care.

Indeed, "professionals who develop emotional abilities, and are able to sensitize with the situations experienced during their daily lives, avoiding a technicist care, but prepared to offer a humanized care to clients, with no exploitation, domination, or distrust"⁽⁴⁾ are necessary in the hospital environment.

The expression humanization has been frequently used meaning the association of technological resources and recognition of the patient's individuality, understood as an integral being and, at the same time, a singular being with particular needs.

Considering the caring ambit, the humanization is supported by the responsible professional practice, in an effort to provide people with respect to their real and potential needs, recognizing the patient as a co-participant in the rehabilitation and cure processes⁽⁵⁻⁶⁾.

Therefore, the humanized care requires a professional with technical abilities at his/her functions, besides personal competence, evidenced by the capacity to perceive and comprehend the human being the patient is, his/her existence experience, and satisfying their intrinsic needs; very much favoring the positive confrontation of the moment being experienced, besides preserving their autonomy, that is, the right to decide on what they wish for themselves, their health and body, as such right is one of the first things diminished or lost when they get ill.

It is relevant to highlight the healthcare humanization spans the respect for one's individuality, at the same time it evokes a holistic perception of such being, going beyond the biologicist comprehension of the disease and covering the psychological, social, and spiritual aspects that, either directly or indirectly, influence on the health-disease process.

Nursing is the health field profession which requires the professional stays close to clients for more time, having, as a work object, the caring that aims to establish bonds, promote the encounter, build relationships, and get to know the other⁽⁷⁾. The nurse should be a facilitator to promote health and biological, psychological, social, spiritual, and emotional well being to the clients, guiding them towards a better way to face the disease and hospitalization processes.

In order to do this, the nursing care should be human and holistic, under an integrated approach, which does not exclude the emotional care, more extensive and personalized to clients, generating quality assistance. However, "the nursing actions only mean something when the care results from an interactive process, where the intention to take actions and the knowledge of what is expected from each one in the caring process are manifested"⁽⁸⁾.

Thus, nursing professionals should use communication as an instrument to humanize the care, dialoguing with patients, aiming to clarify doubts regarding the treatment, diagnosis exams, or clinical procedures, minimizing the anxiety caused by the patient's passive condition, imposed by the disease and hospitalization.

The dialogic interaction between the caregiver and the patient receiving care presents itself as a possibility to build humanized caring practices, thus, the communication importance is undeniable with regards to its incentive to humanization and nursing care, once it enables a better understanding of the needs patients have,

due to their vulnerability caused by the disease and hospitalization.

Considering the above exposed, the present study aimed to highlight the communication as a basic instrument in the humanized caring process when nursing a hospitalized patient.

METHODS

This is a bibliographic research, consubstantiated in the literature related to the proposed theme. It is important to highlight that the modality of this study type is based on the dissemination of theoretical contributions concerning a certain subject⁽⁹⁾. Thus, in order to accomplish the present article, the authors followed some methodological steps, as described below.

As a first step, a survey on the bibliographic material regarding the proposed theme was done, as of an extensive literature review, which occurred in the first quarter of 2008. Online and printed sources were included, such as books and periodical articles, totalizing around thirty references covering the theme.

With regards to printed references, some of them were acquired from the Library of the Nursing Post Graduation course, Universidade Federal da Paraíba, and others, from the researchers' personal files. The online references were obtained from the Scientific Electronic Library Online database – SciELO; Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde – LILACS (Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature) and from the International Health Sciences Literature – MEDLINE.

After that, all the bibliographic references considered relevant were accurately selected according to the subject proposed by this study. Therefore, the bibliographic material chosen for the elaboration of this article talked about communication as a basic instrument for the caring practice, or about communication as a tool for the care humanization. This was the inclusion criteria used by the researchers to elaborate this article and review the literature.

The next step was to carefully read each article and highlight some excerpts according to each topic approached and their respective references, aiming to accomplish the above mentioned research, as of the elaboration of a preliminary text, covering the main points of the proposed study.

After the elaboration of the present article, the authors searched for gaps in its structural coherence, subsidizing, subsequently, the final research report.

It is also important to highlight that the researchers considered the ethical principles from the Código de Ética dos Profissionais de Enfermagem (Nursing Professionals Ethics Code) – Resolution n.º 311/2007⁽¹⁰⁾

from the Conselho Federal de Enfermagem (Nursing Federal Council), with regard to the elaboration of scientific researches.

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

The communication is inherent to the human behavior and pervades all its actions when performing a function. Etymologically, the word “communicate” comes from Latin *communicare*, which means *become common*. Therefore, the communication may be understood as a “process to exchange and understand messages that are sent and received”, as of which “people perceive each other, share ideas, thoughts, and purposes meanings”⁽¹¹⁾.

Communication involves interpersonal competence during interactions and is the basis of the relationship among human beings, besides being a “vital and reciprocal process capable of influencing and affecting people’s behavior”⁽¹²⁾.

The communicative act, while an interactive and interpretative phenomenon, reveals the necessary relationship among human beings once it is from the communicational process we share experiences, anguish, and insecurities at the same time we satisfy our needs while relational beings.

Therefore, communication is an important factor to help understand the *emic*, that is, what is lived by people, and is essential for nursing care, improving the quality of the assistance given to the patient going through the anxiety and stress deriving from the disease and hospitalization processes.

Communication in the hospital scenario allows an authentic care is given to patients, not only a regular care, for it helps them manifest their needs to search for solutions, emphasizing individuality, promoting an interpersonal relationship as to minimize depersonalization process experienced by the inpatient as of an integral caring, perceiving the human being as a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual being, not as a being fragmented into his/her functional systems.

With such scope, the nursing care as a humanized assistance practice should be focused on the need for communication as a strategy to bring patients-staff closer, on the reconstruction of the relationship between the nursing professional and the human being hospitalized, directly reflecting on the quality of the services rendered by health institutions and on the way they are perceived by users.

Communication has had an important role for nursing with regards to a competent and humanitarian care, and it should reach a broader sense, which privileges the patient through a therapeutic relationship, understood as an interactive and personalized process, involving affinity, understanding and acceptance between nurse and

patient⁽¹³⁾. It is understood, then, that the dialogue “will only be regarded as care if it affects the other on what they expect and wish”⁽⁷⁾.

Based on this understanding, it is necessary that nursing professionals aim to communicate with patients in an attentive and respectful way, using an accessible language, as well as non-verbal communication, thus establishing a genuine communication, offering the necessary elements to satisfy patients fragilized by the hospitalization process, by providing care which helps them describe their experience, prioritizing what they think and feel.

Therefore, communication in the relationship between patients-nursing professionals is a basic instrument to build strategies that aim a humanized care, such as, for instance, utilizing an accessible language, valorizing the attentive listening, a smile or an expression of confidence, a look that demonstrates tranquility, an affective touch that provides support and comfort, a word that encourages and elevates the patients’ self esteem.

Concerning communication as an instrument to humanize the nursing care, it is essential for the staff to develop “their perception and sensitivity, so as to get closer to the other and enable the full expression of what is communicated and heard, resulting in a differentiated care”⁽⁸⁾.

It is relevant to highlight that the promotion of a human care is influenced by an efficient communicational process between the nursing professional and the patient, either verbally or non-verbally, and through a common signification universe developed during the nursing practice, which is guided by the art of understanding and sharing messages that are sent and received^(1,14).

In the communicational process, it is also important to highlight that verbal and non-verbal communication strengthen the affective bond between the nursing professional and the patient, providing an intersubjective relationship, emphasizing the individual needs of each patient.

In this context, the verbal communication value is undeniable for the nursing professional-patient relationship, once an understandable language used with patients allows them to obtain information concerning their disease, clinical treatment, and prognosis, offering elements for the patient’s satisfaction, once it becomes a way to clarify questions raised, as well as it helps on the description of the experience lived by the patient⁽¹³⁾.

On the other hand, non-verbal communication enables nursing professionals to recognize the patients’ real feelings upon hospitalization, besides being an important resource with regard to understanding doubts manifested along the communication process, which is effective when people start trusting each other. Through non-verbal communication it is possible to notice

difficulties on the verbalization, patients’ dissatisfactions regarding the care they are receiving, once through this type of communication it is possible to observe a process of exteriorization of the psychological being⁽¹⁵⁾.

Non-verbal communication, while body language, destitute of words, but full of meaningful expressions, is perceived as a “complex interpersonal interaction, of which we have little consistency, occurring, sometimes, out of our control” whose “knowledge amplifies our professional perception and is another instrument to improve nursing assistance quality”⁽¹⁶⁾.

It is very important to remark that therapeutic communication consubstantiated into verbal and non-verbal language contributes to a human care in the nursing area and provides room for patients to learn. Therefore, it will allow patients and nurses to be closer, through a trust-based relationship.

When the dialogue with the inpatient is established as an instrument for humanitarian care, the nursing professional is invited to friendly listen to their needs, giving them freedom to suggest solutions, providing, subsequently, well being, when they notice someone is concerned with their condition of fragility due to the disease.

With this scope, it is essential to establish communicational aspects between nursing professionals and patients, generating satisfaction and an effective care, receiving the patient as a person who has the necessity to relate to others and express anguish, fear, and doubt, mainly with regard to the passive condition due to hospitalization.

Therefore, the communication principle, the capacity human beings have to communicate and inter-relate with others, requires that nursing professionals make efforts so that it is fully understood and accessible, with no gaps caused by personal prejudices the professional may have, nor authoritarian behaviors, once the communicational process is a way to establish a relationship to help patients upon the health-disease process being experienced.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The modern world demands healthcare professionals are more and more capacitated, mainly in relation to technology, requiring attributes and knowledge to respond to the demands imposed by the technical-scientific advances. Therefore, the interpersonal relationships end up in an inferior condition, where reason predominates over emotion, and having is valorized in detriment of being.

Thus, it is extremely important to promote a humanized care that preserves the patient’s dignity, perceiving him/her in a holistic and integral way, generating a therapeutic encounter, as of which the

caregiver should consider the weaknesses the patients may have.

As nursing is the encounter between the caregiver and the patient, it is possible to highlight that this profession has an essential role in the humanized care practice as of an effective interaction with the inpatient, creating the opportunity for genuine communication to become a process that aims the creation of spaces that enable patients to satisfy their needs, allowing them to share their experiences, anguish, fears, anxiety, and insecurities. With this scope, caring, meaning a humanized assistance, must be focused on the communication as a strategy to bring caregivers and patients closer.

The communication in nursing, when allowing the construction of subjective identities, collaborates for a quality and human assistance, that goes through the valorization of the patient and his/her dignity, considering him/her as a unique being, with inherent characteristics and needs.

From this perspective, communication is presented as a valuable instrument for genuine and humanized care, once it helps on the description and understanding of

the experience lived by the human being, fragilized by the disease and hospitalization, as of an effective interaction between patients and nursing professionals.

It is important to highlight that communication as a basic instrument for nursing assistance humanization should be perceived both from the verbal and non-verbal aspects, once the observation of the verbal communication systems enables the nursing professionals to notice characteristics from the non-verbal communication, which can be revealed through signs, gestures, movements that express messages and, therefore, help them understand the patients' real needs.

In the present study, there was no intention to produce new knowledge to the nursing area, but to bring up discussions about communication in the nursing practice, aiming to make it effective. Although very discussed in the academic scenario, it is sparsely experienced. Therefore its relevance is restated and recognized as a basic instrument to promote a nursing humanized care, for it allows the patients' interpersonal expression and enables nursing professionals and patients to share situations.

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