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Communication and Interpersonal Relationships

Nursing Foundation

Types and levels of communication, therapeutic communication, barriers to communication, nurse-patient relationship, interviewing and interpersonal skills.

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07. COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. Definition

Communication is the exchange of information, thoughts, feelings and ideas between individuals.

2. Elements of Communication

Sender -> Encoding -> Message -> Channel -> Receiver -> Decoding -> Feedback.

Noise and environmental interference may affect the process.

3. Types of Communication

Type	Description
Verbal	Spoken communication
Non-verbal	Gestures, posture, facial expressions and tone
Written	Documentation and written instructions
Visual	Charts, diagrams and pictures
Electronic	Digital communication and clinical information systems

4. Levels of Communication

- Intrapersonal: Communication within oneself.
- Interpersonal: Communication between individuals.
- Small-group: Communication among group members.
- Public: Communication to a larger audience.
- Organizational: Communication within institutions.

5. Principles of Effective Communication

The Seven Cs are clear, concise, concrete, correct, coherent, complete and courteous.

6. Therapeutic Communication

Purposeful professional communication that supports patient well-being.

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Techniques

- Active listening.
- Open-ended questioning.
- Clarification.
- Reflection.
- Restating.
- Therapeutic silence.
- Summarizing.
- Providing accurate information.
- Empathy.

Non-Therapeutic Techniques

- False reassurance.
- Judgmental statements.
- Arguing.
- Unnecessary criticism.
- Interrupting.
- Dismissing patient concerns.
- Giving unrealistic promises.

7. Barriers to Communication

- Language differences.
- Hearing or visual impairment.
- Environmental noise.
- Anxiety and fear.
- Cultural differences.
- Medical terminology.
- Limited health literacy.
- Lack of privacy.

Management

Use simple language, qualified interpreters, communication aids, active listening and teach-back.

8. Nurse-Patient Relationship

A professional therapeutic relationship based on trust, empathy, confidentiality and respect.

Phases

Phase	Activities
Pre-interaction	Preparation and review of patient information
Orientation	Introduction, rapport and identification of needs
Working	Implementation of care and problem-solving
Termination	Evaluation and professional closure

9. Interviewing

A nursing interview is a purposeful conversation conducted to obtain information about patient needs.

Types

- Structured.
- Semi-structured.
- Unstructured.

Steps

1. Prepare a private environment.
2. Introduce yourself.
3. Explain the purpose.
4. Establish rapport.
5. Ask relevant questions.
6. Listen and clarify.
7. Summarize findings.
8. Document relevant information.

10. Interpersonal Skills

- Empathy
- Assertiveness
- Respect
- Cooperation
- Emotional regulation
- Negotiation
- Conflict resolution
- Teamwork

11. SBAR Communication

Component	Meaning
S	Situation
B	Background
A	Assessment
R	Recommendation

SBAR is useful during handover, referral and clinical escalation.

12. Communication with Special Patient Groups

- Children: Use developmentally appropriate explanations and play.
- Older adults: Allow additional response time.
- Hearing impairment: Face the patient and use appropriate aids.
- Unconscious patients: Explain procedures respectfully.
- Language differences: Arrange qualified interpretation where available.
- Anxious patients: Communicate calmly and clearly.

Nursing Responsibilities

Maintain confidentiality, verify understanding, communicate abnormal findings, prevent communication errors and document significant interactions.

Important Examination Questions

1. Explain the communication process and its types.
2. Describe therapeutic communication techniques.
3. Discuss barriers to communication.
4. Explain the phases of the nurse-patient relationship.
5. Describe SBAR and nursing interview techniques.

Conclusion

Effective communication is essential for therapeutic relationships, accurate assessment, patient education and safe multidisciplinary care.

Quick Revision

- Communication includes sender, encoding, message, channel, receiver, decoding and feedback.
- Communication may be verbal, non-verbal, written, visual or electronic.
- Therapeutic techniques include active listening, open questions, clarification, reflection, silence and empathy.
- Avoid false reassurance, judgment, arguing, interruption and unrealistic promises.

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- Relationship phases are pre-interaction, orientation, working and termination.

- SBAR means situation, background, assessment and recommendation; teach-back helps verify understanding.

Practice questions

Choose one best answer. The answer key and explanations follow the questions.

1. Which nurse-patient relationship phase involves implementation of care and problem-solving?

A. Orientation
B. Termination
C. Pre-interaction
D. Working

2. Which response is a therapeutic communication technique?

A. False reassurance
B. Clarification
C. Arguing
D. Dismissing concerns

3. In SBAR handover, what does R represent?

A. Recommendation
B. Reassessment
C. Reassurance
D. Referral

4. During a handover, the nurse says, "The patient is newly hypotensive after surgery; I need an urgent medical review." Which SBAR element is the request for review?

A. Recommendation
B. Background
C. Assessment alone
D. Patient identification

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Answer key and explanations

1. D - Working

The working phase implements care and resolves problems.

2. B - Clarification

Clarification helps establish accurate shared understanding.

3. A - Recommendation

SBAR ends with a recommendation.

4. A - Recommendation

Recommendation states the action or response being requested. Situation, background and assessment supply the information needed to support that request.

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