



**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN NURSE TRAINING**  
**GERENCIAMENTO DE CONFLITOS NA FORMAÇÃO DO ENFERMEIRO**  
**GESTIÓN DE CONFLICTOS EN LA FORMACIÓN DEL ENFERMERO**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** to identify some issues related to conflict management in the nursing team from the literature review. **Method:** qualitative study, reflexive analysis, from articles researched in the PubMed/MEDLINE and SciELO library. **Results:** the situations of conflict in the team, when not effectively solved, imply in disorganization of the service, demotivation of the professionals, impairment in the practice of care and at risk to patient and professional safety. The nurse in her continuing education should understand that her professional activity involves teamwork and that she is required to play the role of team leader, whether nursing or multi-professional. Nurses' essential attitudes towards conflict management are leadership, communication, and teamwork, which must be acquired through ongoing training in which there are the development of these and other skills capable of supporting the quality of nursing practice. **Conclusion:** it presents the need for continuing education in administration and management in the training process of nursing students, strengthening professional skills indispensable for future good performance in the care for the sick. **Descriptors:** Leadership; Communication; Education; Nursing; Decision Making.

**RESUMO**

**Objetivo:** identificar algumas questões relacionadas ao gerenciamento de conflitos na equipe de enfermagem a partir de revisão da literatura. **Método:** estudo qualitativo, do tipo análise reflexiva, desenvolvido a partir de artigos pesquisados nas bases de dados PubMed/MEDLINE e SciELO. **Resultados:** as situações de conflito na equipe, quando não efetivamente solucionadas, geram desorganização no serviço, desmotivação profissional, comprometimento na prática do cuidado e põe em risco à segurança do paciente e do profissional. O enfermeiro em sua formação continuada deve compreender que sua atividade profissional envolve o trabalho em equipe, sendo a ele atribuído obrigatoriamente o papel de líder de sua equipe de enfermagem ou multiprofissional. As atitudes essenciais dos enfermeiros para o gerenciamento de conflitos são liderança, comunicação e trabalho em equipe, os quais devem ser adquiridos por meio de treinamento contínuo, em que há o desenvolvimento dessas e outras habilidades capazes de pautar uma prática de enfermagem de qualidade. **Conclusão:** existe a necessidade de educação continuada sobre administração e gestão no processo de formação dos estudantes de enfermagem para se fortalecer suas habilidades profissionais indispensáveis para o adequado desempenho futuro no cuidado aos clientes. **Descritores:** Liderança; Comunicação; Educação; Enfermagem; Tomada de Decisão.

**RESUMEN**

**Objetivo:** identificar algunas cuestiones relacionadas con la gestión de conflictos en el equipo de enfermería a partir de la revisión de la literatura. **Método:** estudio cualitativo, del tipo análisis reflexivo, desarrollado a partir de artículos encuestados en las bases de datos PubMed/MEDLINE y SciELO. **Resultados:** las situaciones de conflicto en el equipo, cuando no son efectivamente solucionadas, generan desorganización en el servicio, desmotivación profesional, compromiso en la práctica del cuidado y pone en riesgo a la seguridad del paciente y del profesional. El enfermero en su formación continua debe comprender que su actividad profesional involucra el trabajo en equipo, siendo a él atribuido obligatoriamente el papel de líder de su equipo de enfermería o multiprofesional. Las actitudes esenciales de los enfermeros para la gestión de conflictos son liderazgo, comunicación y trabajo en equipo, los cuales deben ser adquiridos por medio de entrenamiento continuo, en que hay el desarrollo de esas y otras habilidades capaces de pautar una práctica de enfermería de calidad. **Conclusión:** existe la necesidad de educación continuada sobre administración y gestión en el proceso de formación de los estudiantes de enfermería para fortalecer sus habilidades profesionales indispensables para el adecuado desempeño futuro en el cuidado a los clientes. **Descriptores:** Liderazgo; Comunicación; Educación; Enfermería; Toma de Decisiones.

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## INTRODUCTION

The nursing profession has undergone significant changes since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The nursing knowledge area has been expanded within the practice of different nursing roles that were unimaginable 50 years ago. The roles of nurse manager and chief nurse have evolved significantly in response to changes and demands of the health sector over the last 20 years.

The need to practice communication skills, interpersonal relationship and management comes from changes in the care model, which seeks to be distanced from the hegemonic medical model and verticalized power relationships, opening new ways of doing health and for the strengthening, and credibility in the actions of the nurse<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the essential characteristics for success in the job market are increasingly based on skills that require sophisticated business knowledge and managerial skills.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the domain of managerial skills and the exercise of leadership contribute to the performance of nurses in these new workspaces.<sup>3</sup>

The nurses are characterized by the ability of leadership, supervision, management, implementation of change, intuition, communication, and relationship. They have the ability to act reflexively, planning, systematizing, evaluating consistently, having manual skills, having greater adaptability, and having a more holistic view of health care. Also, they are skilled in conflict management, coping with stress, emotional prepared, articulating theory and practice, developing new knowledge from the use of research and enhancing care, responding to complex situations, and being able to make decisions.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the nurse needs to develop several skills in the care process, since he is part of the care environment, whether hospital or community, but also the developments of management and leadership skills are needed as a member of a multidisciplinary team where many conflicts occur, and therefore, it is up to the nurse to forget mechanisms to manage them.

Nursing managers should be able to deal with employee conflicts because, when this conflict is not adequately addressed, it can significantly affect employee motivation and self-esteem, care for patients, neglect of care, and even affect the general well-being and reputation of the organization.

Problems in the health team hinder the development of work, causing emotional exhaustion, diminishing employee income on

the job, lack of motivation and imprudence. It is necessary that the nursing work process is pleasurable, generating good results and carrying outpatient care in a safe and quality way. Thus, it is important to analyze more deeply the differences between the employees that cause the conflicts, seeking an effective solution on the etiological factors of this disharmony.<sup>5</sup>

Conflicts are disagreements between people or groups, resulting from differences of ideas, values or feelings that generate the breaking of order or negative experience. Competitive and disruptive conflicts often lead to continued frustrations and disagreements, making the work environment unpleasant. Conflicts will always arise, no matter how efficient the manager and the better and more perfect the institution is in fact.<sup>6</sup>

There is no adequate or inadequate strategy to deal with conflicts. However, early detection of conflict and adoption of the most effective conflict resolution behavior is essential in nursing units as soon as possible.<sup>7</sup>

Nursing requires complex combinations of knowledge, performance, skills, and attitudes. A holistic definition of skills needs to be agreed and operationalized in different caring practices.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, during his training, the nurse is molded in his competencies necessary for the care setting, such as the attitudes that influence his behavior in front of people and situations.

In practices that are initially simple in the classroom, such as group work, the exercise of leadership and communication is stimulated and the recognition of different ideas and opinions is encouraged, promoting the respect for freedom of expression and the uniqueness of classmates. In this way, the teaching of conflict management for nurses and nursing managers is essential.

Thus, this article discusses the importance of leadership, communication, and teamwork in the environments in which nursing performance is present and aims to highlight the role of conflict management in the professional development of nursing professionals in favor of the team's success against the different situations. Consequently, this article emphasizes the need of reflexive actions, with effective participation in the management process and with professional competence to actively participate in the resolution of conflicts in the nursing team, which is concerned with patient safety and team harmony. This exemplarily implements the process of evolution of care and

understands the complexity of the different situations they will be exposed.

## OBJECTIVE

- To identify some issues related to conflict management in the nursing team from the literature review.

## METHOD

This research is a reflexive analysis based on national and international scientific articles researched found in the PubMed/MEDLINE and in the SciELO library. The articles were analyzed and grouped according to their proximity with the selected theme. The reflection frame was given, addressing the issue regarding conflict management in nursing daily activities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conflict emerges from human interaction. A conflict is a natural component of any interpersonal relationship, including in the care setting. The inability to solve the conflict can affect all aspects of an organization, including patient safety, care processes performed, cost of services, health professionals' well-being and professional-patient and professional interactions-interdisciplinary team.

It is essential for leaders of health units to learn to work with conflict within the context of an organization, to understand the current approach to the conflict and what has been their contribution to the establishment of this conflict. Dealing effectively with conflicts in complex systems requires the understanding of how the system works and, finally, it requires the accomplishment of changes when thinking towards a systemic view of organizations<sup>9</sup>. This systemic view involves the entire organization, the different processes of work that guarantees good results in the practice of care, such as communication between sectors.

Emotional intelligence is needed for nurses to solve workplace conflicts, seeking collaborative solutions when confronted with the conflict<sup>10</sup>. A recent study at the University of Hong Kong with nursing students found that the way students viewed and managed conflicts varied according to their emotional intelligence. The lower the emotional intelligence, the more students tended to avoid the conflict instead of solving it.<sup>11</sup>

The skills that most need to be developed are: managing the work team; being an innovator and agent of change; solving problems; managing the programs developed

and motivating the work team. Finally, the attitudes with the biggest gaps are: being a leader educator; developing team initiative and autonomy; encouraging the creativity of community teams and groups; being creative and stimulating teamwork.<sup>12</sup>

These skills to be developed and improved are acquired through different experiences. Often by trial and error, others by thinking that the position of leadership occupies power or based on norms and routines. Thus, more than just nurses, these conflict management professionals are people with distinct life histories, personalities, and skills that need to be stoned to foster conflict management in a healthy way.

Excellence in nursing care will only happen through leaders who are able to respond to the complexity of change in the management process. Professionals who train and encourage the staff have to allow innovative and entrepreneurial practices by the nursing practice team. It is important to adopt a leadership that facilitates motivation and autonomy, that is, active professionals capable of experiencing well the recurring changes in a healthy environment for the performance of excellence in nursing.<sup>13</sup>

A consideration-oriented style of leadership, emphasizing mutual respect and open communication, rather than controlling behaviors is needed.<sup>14</sup> A leadership style that favors the expression of their ideas and the implementation of their strategies in a shared way in favor of the patient, their families, the team and the institution, reflecting quality in care. A good leader considers the opinion of its leaders, making a mutual, continuous and interactive learning.<sup>15</sup>

For the nurse to be able to exercise effective leadership, he must know himself first. A good leader is aware of his virtues and his weaknesses and takes advantage of these characteristics to exert influence and develop more and more as a person and professional. The authenticity of the leader, in his way of being, is what makes him discover new destinations and inspire followers to pursue a new future.<sup>3</sup>

The leader needs to recognize the importance of the followers for the good functioning of all processes within the institution. The leader needs to have interpersonal sensitivity to recognize the goals and expectations of his followers because the formation of bonds between them and the leader is very important for the good performance of the group during the planning and execution of their tasks.<sup>16</sup>



In an environment of progressive change, leadership must be understood by those who wish to practice it as an intentional and influence-based process - very different from positional power, manipulation, or coercion. Guided by intentional influence, people tend to have greater self-confidence and acquire greater credibility to change and influence not only people but also the environment in which they live. True leadership occurs when followers decide to follow their leaders by believing in them and their ideals.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, a leader should be based on institutional commitment to standards and routines, but also with the well-being of the health team and with the ability to communicate effectively and clearly to the care with excellence.

Communication is characterized as a vital function, where the individuals and organizations relate to each other, as well as the environment and the parts of their own group, influencing each other and transforming facts into information.<sup>17</sup>

Communication from a dialogical and interactive perspective is formalized based on the transmission and maintenance of hospital routines and norms. Communication is a working tool in nursing management since when it is clear and effective, it favors the care of human beings hospitalized in the context of health organizations, facilitating nursing work.<sup>18</sup>

It is observed that communication in nursing can be perceived as a relationship of dialogue and sharing of message or the transmission of information, often more concerned with the sending of their messages than with the effect and/or action that is expected as a consequence of the transmission of the message.<sup>18</sup>

Interactive dialogic communication allows us to discuss ways to optimize care, establishing shared management, and sharing ideas between the boss and the team to avoid conflicts and to have a good understanding of shared information.

Therefore, communication is one of the fundamental tools for nursing management, as well as a social practice based on the production, circulation, and exchange of information, involving all the processes of the hospital environment. For this reason, it is extremely important for nurses to develop theoretical knowledge about the constituent elements of the communication process, as well as to understand the importance of communication for interpersonal relationships in a successful management.

Nurses must establish good relationships among their members so the team works effectively. Healthy relationships result from good communication, mutual acceptance, and understanding, the use of persuasion rather than coercion and the balance between reason and emotion when there is a need to work with other human beings. Thus, active conflict management is an integral part of the positive building of collegial relationships. Colleagues who work together to effectively manage conflict, help fostering a work environment that produces positive outcomes for both nurses and clients.<sup>19</sup>

Although teamwork encompasses a number of factors, it is found that communication and leadership are significant predictors of nursing teamwork for successful care delivery. Therefore, communication and leadership skills favor more conflict management and delivery of results is particularly relevant in the provision of solutions. Thus, the trained nurse who already exerts his/her workforce in the assistance needs training programs of leadership skills and continuous communication to sustain the excellent process of taking care of the health organization to which he is integral.<sup>20</sup>

According to a recent study in Istanbul (Turkey), nursing students who had teaching strategies for developing interpersonal skills in their curricula developed better conflict resolution skills, such as empathy, listening skills, anger management and social adaptation. In this way, newly trained nurses must develop knowledge, skills and favorable attitudes in the management area to build a differentiated care practice in the search for excellence.<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of the motivational factor of the conflict, it is indispensable that the manager assumes his role of mediator to solve it. According to Marquis and Huston, organizational conflicts can be classified as intrapersonal, interpersonal and intergroup. Intrapersonal conflicts occur when the person has internal conflicts, in which his values and ideals are contradictory. Interpersonal conflicts are considered to be between two or more people, where their beliefs are discordant. Intergroup conflicts occur between groups, sectors or organizations.<sup>22</sup>

Besides to explicit conflicts, where it is noticeable that something is not flowing harmoniously between people, there are also implicit or latent conflicts, which are as or more evil than explicit conflicts because these conflicts are not commonly affected by managers. Regardless of the conflict, all types generate emotional wear and tear on the

professionals and damage the team, the patient, and the organization.

The resolution of problems and conflicts with more effective approaches by the managers will be associated with better performance of the unit, involving the healthy interpersonal relationship in the decision making, the respect to the other and not a selfish behavior over their only will, as these are important for the balance of the team.

The historical moment in which the nursing is found requires an innovative care position of the nurse, with well-defined communication and leadership skills. All these new characteristics enable positive changes in the work process and in nursing interactions.

For nurses to exercise their managerial role with excellence, future studies of the nurse's required skills should be performed using samples containing nurses, teachers, and students. Thus, relationships between the inclusion of management skills in the curriculum of nursing undergraduate courses and the better performance of nurses in care can be found and foster great changes in the teaching of nursing management.

These studies will allow us to know more about this particular and specific universe that reflects the subjectivity, associated with personality and organizational culture. Investigations such as these reflect a higher quality care, because the managerial aspects when well resolved, favor the well-being and motivation of the professionals and the more effective accomplishment of the work process.

## CONCLUSION

Communication skills, teamwork, and leadership favor conflict management. In the training of nurses, group activities with different people, such as interdisciplinary groups allow the development of this ability. It is a constant challenge, continuous education, skills of self-knowledge as well as interpersonal relationship and thematic as described. The professional must understand the dynamic process of relationship as an exchange of experience, which will be positive when the conflict is solved or prevented.

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