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Internal communication as a strategic focus in nursing teams / La comunicación interna como eje estratégico en los equipos de enfermería

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ABSTRACT

The article aimed to analyse the role of internal communication in healthcare institutions and its impact on the quality of care, the working environment and the performance of nursing staff. Recent literature and regulatory documents addressing interpersonal relationships, formal information channels and standardised clinical data transfer devices were reviewed. It was described that deficiencies in internal communication were associated with misinformation, increased work stress, the circulation of rumours, and unfavourable organisational climates, while healthy interpersonal relationships, teamwork, and communicative leadership were linked to greater efficiency, motivation, and patient safety. Experiences of training in health communication, leadership, and non-technical skills were presented, emphasising their contribution to strengthening cooperation and caring for those who care. Formal guidelines and procedures were also analysed, such as good practices for shift handover and the use of structured SBAR and IPASS tools, which made it possible to organise the transfer of information and ensure continuity of care. The article concluded that internal communication should be considered a strategic management focus rather than an ancillary aspect, and that the combination of specific training, standardised protocols and clear institutional channels offered a viable way to improve nursing staff performance, reduce adverse events and promote safer and more humanised care environments.

Keywords: Internal Communication; Nursing; Teamwork; Quality of Care; Patient Safety.

RESUMEN

El artículo tuvo por objetivo analizar el papel de la comunicación interna en las instituciones de salud y su impacto sobre la calidad de la atención, el clima laboral y el desempeño del personal de enfermería. Se revisó literatura reciente y documentos normativos que abordaron las relaciones interpersonales, los canales formales de información y los dispositivos estandarizados de traspaso de datos clínicos. Se describió que las deficiencias en la comunicación interna se asociaron con desinformación, aumento del estrés laboral, circulación de rumores y climas organizacionales desfavorables, mientras que las relaciones interpersonales sanas, el trabajo en equipo y el liderazgo comunicacional se vincularon con mayor eficiencia, motivación y seguridad del paciente. Se presentaron experiencias de capacitación en comunicación en salud, liderazgo y habilidades no técnicas, enfatizando su aporte al fortalecimiento de la cooperación y al cuidado de quienes cuidan. Asimismo, se analizaron lineamientos y procedimientos formales, como las buenas prácticas para el pase de guardia y el uso de herramientas estructuradas SBAR e IPASS, que permitieron ordenar el traspaso de información y garantizar la continuidad de los cuidados. El artículo concluyó que la comunicación interna debía ser considerada un eje estratégico de gestión y no un aspecto accesorio, y que la combinación de formación específica,

protocolos estandarizados y canales institucionales claros ofreció un camino viable para mejorar el desempeño del personal de enfermería, reducir eventos adversos y promover entornos de atención más seguros y humanizados.

Palabras clave: Comunicación Interna; Enfermería; Trabajo en Equipo; Calidad de la Atención; Seguridad del Paciente.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process of social interaction that allows people to transmit, exchange, understand, and share information. In healthcare institutions, internal communication is essential, as deficiencies in this area have been linked to declines in care quality, effectiveness, team performance, and increased stress among professionals. However, healthcare institutions lack measures and guidelines for communicating and/or addressing problems caused by poor communication.

On the other hand, in 2021, the author Suárez stated that "internal communication must be in line with the organizational objectives of growth and expansion, thus enhancing daily working relationships and promoting a positive working environment in the hospital." She also argued that:

Interpersonal communication is essential for fostering bonds, providing information, encouraging participation, and enabling interaction among professionals. Inadequate communication channels directly affect the institution. Failure to establish a plan leads to a lack of information among professionals, concerns, work-related stress, and a lack of recognition and appreciation from leaders, giving rise to informal communication in which information secrecy turns into rumors, uncertainties, and fears, sometimes leading to crises and an undesirable work environment.

This author addressed internal communication and leadership training, and how these factors influence efficiency and optimal daily performance. The main problem she identified was the lack of internal communication channels, which reduced optimization, productivity, and efficiency in developing the sanatorium's daily activities, resulting in low employee performance.

Leadership training was planned at the institution to develop leaders' necessary skills and to create a human resources department and an internal communication audit department. In addition, a corporate social network was incorporated as a digital tool, along with job satisfaction surveys and performance evaluations.

The authors Ortiz et al.[1] stated that "in the interviews, complaints were expressed about the lack of clear and accurate information about the pandemic, the main determinant of which appeared to be the absence of a single institutional channel defined by the authorities". This article highlighted the need for tools that enable accurate communication. Although it is framed in the context of the pandemic, this need is also evident today.

On the other hand, the document "Good Practices for the Nursing Shift Handover Process for the Optimization of Effective Communication" from the Ministry of Health of the Argentine Republic[2] reflects the shift handover as a standardized communication tool in the healthcare team.

The SBAR tool (situation, background, assessment, recommendation) is used, a structured form of communication that allows information to be transferred accurately between professionals. In addition, the IPASS tool (illness severity, patient summary, action list, situational awareness, contingency plan, and recipient summary) complements the shift handover mechanism, making it safer by accounting for the most relevant data for each patient.

The Institute of Health for Retirees in the city of Rosario uses the aforementioned IPASS tool for the communication procedure. This is a paper form, with the priority being to establish structured processes for the transfer of information and responsibilities, such as shift change procedures and patient transfers to other areas or units, so they are clear and compelling. To use this tool, the doctor and nurse in charge of the patient must complete it with the relevant information to provide continuity of care.

When patients leave closed areas, information is provided, for example, on pending tests, possible allergies, and whether family members are present who can contribute to fall-prevention care. In addition, before initiating a transfer, the orderly must request the physical IPASS form. In addition, one of the health professionals has developed a proposal on this topic to be used as a tool for health workers.

Interpersonal communication is an intervening variable for healthcare workers, as a good work environment reduces much of the work-related stress and promotes emotional well-being. Improving the work environment and optimizing interpersonal relationships creates a framework of trust and respect, where conflicts are minimized, and motivation for work and personal development is increased. Improving internal communication and teamwork makes health work more effective and healthy.[3]

Through asynchronous and face-to-face training, developed in four modules, the Medical Association of the Province of Santa Fe addressed topics such as: communication in healthcare, communication tools, critical communication, crucial conversations and protocols, nonverbal communication, therapeutic and motivational communication, teamwork, and who cares for the caregivers? Through simulations, exercises, motivation, protocols, tests, and trust exercises.

DEVELOPMENT

The theoretical framework of this proposal is structured around internal communication, interpersonal relationships, and formal mechanisms for information transfer within healthcare teams, all of which have a direct impact on job performance and the quality of care.

Campos-Cabello[4] argues that interpersonal relationships among healthcare personnel are a central factor in job performance, as they affect the work environment, efficiency, and professionals' mental health. Maintaining healthy relationships promotes cooperation, reduces conflicts, and contributes to a safer environment for patients, which is why the relational dimension cannot be dissociated from the organization of healthcare work.

Along the same lines, Carrasco-Villate[5] shows that the quality of care perceived by patients in an obstetrics service is closely linked to interpersonal relationships among healthcare personnel, highlighting the importance of collaboration, respect, and teamwork as conditions for timely and humanized care.

This reaffirms that communication not only affects the team but also the experience and

safety of those receiving care.

A study delves into communication in healthcare teams as an interactive process that structures daily cooperation. He points out that effective coordination, precise information flow, and the ability to express doubts or discrepancies are pillars of high-quality interdisciplinary work. At the same time, poor communication is associated with errors, task duplication, and increased stress.

From a training perspective, the Medical Association of the Province of Santa Fe emphasizes the need for specific training in health communication, teamwork, and crucial conversations, aimed at strengthening communication skills, non-technical skills, and the care of those who care.

These training opportunities aim to develop competencies that enable individuals to handle situations of high emotional and organizational complexity.

Internal communication is a strategic management axis that must be aligned with institutional objectives and supported by effective leadership.

The author shows that the absence of formal channels and communication plans generates rumors, uncertainty, and poor performance, and that this absence also promotes the implementation of specific measures, such as human resources departments, communication audits, and digital tools.

In critical scenarios such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Ortiz et al.[1] document healthcare workers' concerns about the lack of clear information and the absence of a single institutional channel, underscoring the need for defined, reliable communication structures.

In response to these issues, regulatory and procedural guidelines have been developed. The Ministry of Health[2] proposes best practices for nursing shift handover, incorporating standardized tools such as SBAR and IPASS to ensure a clear, complete, and safe shift handover. Complementarily, PAMI[6] establishes formal communication procedures for patient transfer, emphasizing continuity of care and the accuracy of clinical information transfer.

Together, these contributions support the need to strengthen internal communication and interpersonal relationships through training strategies, leadership, standardized protocols, and formal channels as an essential condition for improving nursing staff performance, the work environment, and the quality of care.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the article recognized that internal communication in healthcare institutions is a strategic component, not just an operational one, with a direct impact on the quality of care, team well-being, and patient safety. The theoretical review showed that deficiencies in formal communication channels led to misinformation, increased work stress, the spread of rumors, and the emergence of unfavorable work environments. At the same time, healthy interpersonal relationships, teamwork, and communicative leadership were associated with greater efficiency, motivation, and professional performance.

The contributions of Suárez, Campos-Cabello, Carrasco-Villate, Dartiguelongue, and Ortiz,

together with the proposals of the Ministry of Health of the Nation, PAMI, and the College of Physicians, showed that it is possible to transform this problem through a combination of standardized protocols (such as SBAR and IPASS), systematic training, auditing devices, and the institutionalization of clear and unique channels of information. In this way, communication ceased to be understood as an accessory aspect and became established as a cross-cutting axis of care management.

Finally, it is essential to highlight the need for nursing services, particularly those related to maternity and obstetric care, to adopt comprehensive plans to improve internal communication that articulate institutional policies, effective leadership, and concrete tools for information transfer. Further development of these lines of action would not only optimize work organization and reduce adverse events, but also strengthen the work environment and promote safer and more humanized settings for healthcare teams and the people receiving care.

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FINANCING

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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