



# 1

## Chapter

# Professionalism

### Learning Objectives

**After studying this chapter, the learner should be able to:**

- Understand the definition and criteria of the profession.
- Explain nursing as profession.
- Describe the definition and characteristics of a profession.
- Explain the concept, attributes and indicators of professionalism.
- Understand the challenges of professionalism.
- Discuss the concept of professional conduct.
- Learn about professional grooming.
- Interpret professional boundaries, professional relationships with patients, care givers and team members.

### Chapter Outline

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| • Profession  | • Confidentiality of Medical Records  |
| • Nursing as Profession                                 | • Communication and Relationship with Team Members  |
| • Professionalism as a Skill                            | • Professional Conduct  |
| • Concept, Attributes and Indicators of Professionalism | • Professional Etiquettes and Behaviors   |
| • Challenges of Professionalism                         | • Professional Grooming   |
| • Self-Integrity  | • Professional Boundaries, Professional Relationships with Patients, Care Givers and Team Members |
| • Threats to Integrity in Nursing                       |   |

### Key Terms

- **Code of ethics:** The code of ethics regulates the relation between professional and the client.
- **Falsifying documents:** It is the act of intentionally changing or modifying information on a document with the intention of misleading a person or an institution.
- **Profession:** A profession is any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education.
- **Professional boundaries:** These are the legal, ethical and organizational frameworks that protect both clients and employees, or workers from physical and emotional harm and help to maintain safe working environment.
- **Professional conduct:** It refers to the manners which guide the nurses how to behave professionally.
- **Professional identity:** It is defined as the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills shared with others within a professional group.
- **Professional identity:** It is defined as the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills shared with others within a professional group.
- **Professional identity:** It is one's self as perceived in relation to a profession and to one's membership of it.
- **Self-integrity:** It is staying true to self and to own words, even when individual has to face with serious consequences for the choices he is making.

## PROFESSION

A profession is an occupation based upon specialized educational training. The purpose of profession is to serve others and it is apart from expectation of others business gain. In medieval and early modern time only three professions were recognized including divinity, medicine, and law, which were known as the learned professions. A profession is neither a trade and nor an industry. In short, profession is a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification.

### Definitions

“A profession is a disciplined group of individuals, who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognized body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.” —**Australian Council of Professions, 2003**

“A profession is any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education.” —**Cambridge Dictionary**

### Criteria of a Profession

**Code of ethics:** A profession is guided by the code of ethics that regulates the relation between professional and the client.

**Specific norms and values:** A profession is distinguished by the specific norms, values, and culture of that particular profession.

**Specific criteria for entry:** A profession has clear standard of education and a specific criterion to enter in a profession.

**Continuous professional growth:** A profession can strive only if it provides an opportunity to its professionals for continuous professional growth and economic security.

**Body of knowledge:** A profession requires prolonged specialized training to acquire a body of knowledge pertinent to the roles to be performed.

**Service oriented:** A profession should be able to orient an individual toward service either to an organization or to a community.

**Autonomy:** Members of a profession have autonomy in decision making and practice.

## NURSING AS PROFESSION

Nursing is unique profession in the health care sector focused on the care of individuals, families and communities. Nursing is an art, science and above all is a humanitarian service. Florence Nightingale was the founder of modern nursing. Nurses play a vital role in the health care system of any country whose main goals are to promote healthy lifestyles, prevent diseases, alleviate suffering and rehabilitate individuals. Like other professions, nursing also fulfills the criteria of being a profession.

The following points indicate nursing as a profession:

### **Autonomy**

One specific quality of a profession is that a profession operates independently with legislature in creating policy and it supervises its own professional standards and the practices of its practitioners. All over the world, boards of nursing have the autonomy to determine nursing's standards of practice, allowing nurses to operate autonomously within their established scopes of practice. In some states, advanced practice nurses are able to embark on their own practices.

### **Code of Ethics**

Another quality of a profession is that it must have an established code of ethics that guides the profession as well as defines the relationship between professional and client. Nurses relies on the international Code of Ethics as ethical standards for conduct that guide professional practice. The Code of Ethics directs the goals, values and ethics for nurses. These are the guiding principles, obligations, and commitments of the nursing profession. Ethics in health care includes the rights, responsibilities and obligations of professional and clients. The Code of Ethics holds the nurse accountable for his or her actions along with those of the individuals to whom the nurse delegates tasks involving patient care.

### **Specialized Training**

A profession must have a specialized training that provides pathway into the practice and a constantly growing body of knowledge. Nursing has specific criteria for entering to the profession and also a specialized training that equipped the students with the practical knowledge and theoretical basis to deliver safe and effective health care as integral members of the inter-professional health care team.

### **Professional Organizations**

Nursing profession has specific organizations established at national and international level that set standards for nursing profession. Like The American Nurses Association is a professional organization that advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the economic and general welfare of nurses in the workplace.

### **Body of Knowledge**

The nursing profession's body of knowledge is generated through research and theory building, and is rapidly expanding.

### **Distinct Identity**

The members of nursing profession have a common identity and subculture.

## Altruism

Altruism defined as an orientation towards service. Members of the nursing profession are motivated by altruism and work for the good of the society.

## **PROFESSIONALISM AS A SKILL**

Professionalism is skill or behavior that goes beyond what an ordinary person would have or behaving in a more formal manner. Professionalism is a component of the concept of work ethic, which describes how a person comes to work and conducts himself on the job. There are several ways a person can exemplify professionalism on the job. In simple words, professionalism is the methods, characters or standards expected from professional or professional organization such as reliability, discretion, etc.

## Definitions

Professionalism is the skill, good judgment, and polite behavior that are expected from a person who is trained to do a job well.

Professionalism is commonly understood as an individual's adherence to a set of standards, code of conduct or collection of qualities that characterize accepted practice within a particular area of activity.

## Characteristics

Professionalism is not only the job one does rather it is how the job is being done. Some professions workplaces or roles have particular rules of professionalism; such as dress code. Other rules and expectations may not be in the written form but those are also equally important, such as professional behavior at meetings.

The following are the characteristics of professionalism (Fig. 1.1):

### *Knowledge*

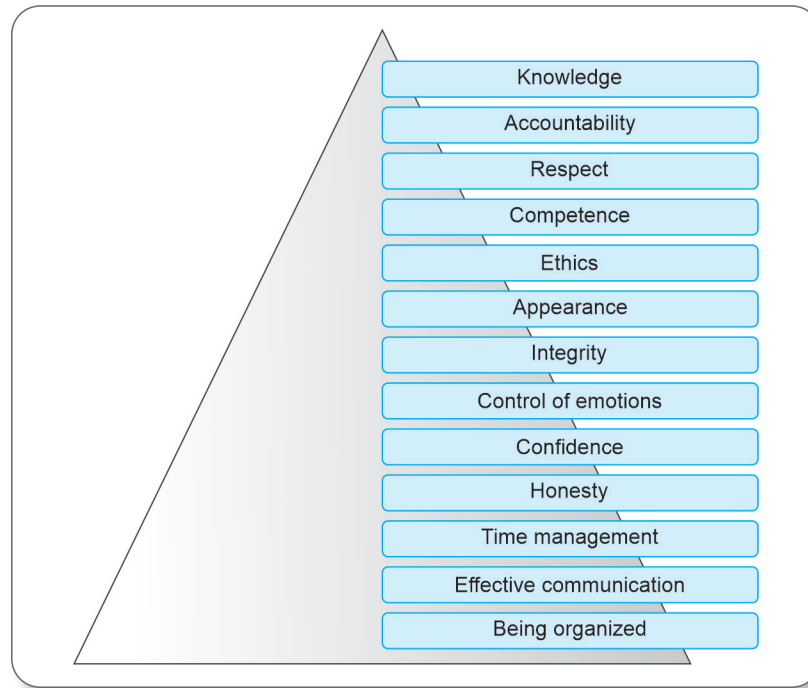
Professionalism involves gaining up-to-date knowledge, which is often highly specialized. It's also important to put the knowledge into action. Being professional means feeling confident.

### *Accountability*

Professionalism involves accountability of the professionals for their actions at all times. It involves being reliable and setting high standards. It also means being organized, and holding oneself accountable for the thoughts, words and actions.

### *Respect*

Professionalism means being a role model for politeness and good manners to everyone, not just for those who need to impress. Respect other people by taking their needs into account, and by helping to uphold their rights.



**Figure 1.1:** Characteristics of professionalism

### *Competence*

Professionals strive to become experts in their field, which sets them apart from the rest of people. This involves continuing education by taking courses, attending seminars and attaining any related professional designations.

### *Ethics*

Professionalism involves adherence to a strict code of ethics. Even if the organization doesn't have a written code, professionals must display ethical behavior at all times.

### *Appearance*

A professional must be neat in appearance. They should follow the dress code of their organization. If there is not any dress code special attention to appearance should be paid when meeting with the clients. There should be appropriateness in outward appearances, such as dress, personal grooming and body language.

### *Integrity*

Integrity means professional people are reliable and true to their word. It also stops them compromising their values, even if that means taking a harder road. Integrity is bound up with being honest to oneself, and to the people one is communicating.

### *Control of Emotions*

Professional should be able to manage the emotions even under pressure. This is also known as emotional intelligence. Professionalism means keeping the emotions in check. But at the same time, it also involves expressing the feelings, in order to have meaningful conversations or to stand up for what one does believe in.

### *Confidence*

Professionalism pushes the person to take on new challenges and make the professional confident about what he is doing at present and always eager to do it better and achieve more.

### *Honesty*

Honesty is the best policy and the value of honesty should not be understated. It is one of the most important traits in any profession. Honesty plays a crucial role in both our personal and professional lives. So, always be honest with the work.

### *Time Management*

Another important characteristic of the professionalism is that all the professionals should know the importance of time management. Time plays a significant role. To be a good professional, one should know how to manage the time. It increases the productivity of work as well as helps to maintain good relationships with the colleagues.

### *Effective Communication*

Effective communication is one of the most important points of the professionalism. Being a professional, one should have good communication skills. Professionals must have good reading, writing and speaking skills. Listening is also an important part of communication and being a professional; one should not only speak but also listen to others.

### *Being Organized*

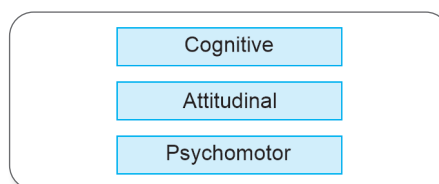
Things get lost and a lot of time is wasted when things are not in an organized manner. It is very important to be organized and keep the work area clean. This will help in doing the work smoothly.

## **CONCEPT, ATTRIBUTES AND INDICATORS OF PROFESSIONALISM**

### **Concept of Professionalism in Nursing**

In nursing, professionalism reflects the act of providing quality patient care while honoring the values of respect, advocacy, and responsibility. Professionalism also extends to a nurse's ability to communicate clearly and self-reflect on behaviors and actions, always striving for both professional and personal development.

Professionalism can be divided in three categories (Fig. 1.2):



**Figure 1.2:** Categories of professionalism

1. **Cognitive:** The cognitive type of professionalism focuses on the ability to continually learn about professional conduct and apply this growing base of knowledge in work settings. Ultimately, nurses who practice this skill should develop the key tools they need to prioritize and make decisions effectively.
2. **Attitudinal:** The attitudinal dimension of nursing professionalism involves the attitudes and ideas that guide nurses as they perform their job duties and advance through their careers. Ideally, the attitudes of nurses should align with practical standards and the broader goals of their organizations.
3. **Psychomotor:** The psychomotor aspect of professionalism in nursing promotes the idea that as professionals gain experience, they can do more than build their clinical skills. They can sharpen their management skills and better understand the inherent obligations and commitments involved in the practice of nursing.

Nurses may apply these principles of professional conduct to become better leaders, guide actions using value judgments, and establish self-directed commitments to provide the highest level of patient care.

### Attributes of Professionalism

Professionalism fosters the development of many admirable soft skills. Nurses may learn these skills through their life and work experience, and develop them over the course of their careers.

Common attributes of professionalism are:

- **Conflict resolution:** This involves a professional's ability to solve a problem. It requires the nurse to consider the needs of everyone involved in the conflict, while communicating possible solutions with respect.
- **Ethical thinking:** This skill enables nurses to make value-based judgments that align with professional standards and moral codes, prioritizing the needs of patients and colleagues ahead of their own.
- **Adaptability:** This demonstrates the capacity to combine new information with education, experience, and professional guidelines to re-evaluate a situation and make changes that lead to more effective solutions.
- **Leadership:** leadership is founded on excellent communication skills, attention to detail, respect, and resourcefulness. Professionals commonly build leadership skills as they move on to more senior roles, in which they can guide others to provide higher levels of care.
- **Collaboration:** This is the key to professionalism. Working with others and being able to communicate and cooperate is crucial to developing an efficient work environment that places patient needs at the forefront.

### Indicators of Professionalism in Nursing

In nursing, professionalism is judged based on personal behaviors, appearance, presentation, and so on. There are various indicators of professionalism that include positive attitude, compassionate patient interactions, professional responsibility, teamwork and integrity, etc.

Main indicators of professionalism are as follows:

#### *Positive Attitude*

The first and most obvious indicator of professionalism in nursing is a positive attitude. As nurses are the backbone of health care system, they must work to maintain a positive environment and communication in

all areas and at all times. Professionalism in nursing requires a nurse to adopt a holistic and optimistic view in any situation, and always aim to help others.

### *Communication and Interactions*

Nurses are the primary point of contact for every patient, who comes to hospital. Therefore, it is paramount that every nurse is capable of interacting positively and productively with each patient. They must treat the patients with the utmost dignity in every circumstance. Interactions of the nurses with patients should always convey compassion. The feelings of the clients must be respected, even if the nurses do not agree with their choices.

### *Kindness*

Approaching others with patience and respect for their perspective enables constructive criticism and stronger collaboration. Treat others as one's like to be treated.

### *Professional Responsibility*

A key indicator of professionalism in any career is the appropriate handling of responsibility. In health care, where people's well-being and lives are in the hands of health professionals, professionalism in nursing is utmost important. A nurse has to care for patients, monitor their vital signs using delicate equipment and handle medication. She must take this very seriously at all times, by demonstrating an awareness of the consequences of a mistake and how to prevent them from occurring.

### *Self-Discipline*

Professionalism in nursing also involves self-discipline. Whilst nurses are to an extent under the jurisdiction of their seniors, they must be self-motivated by keeping their duties on top. Self-discipline is essential in ensuring high standards of patient care.

### *Readiness to Learn*

Another element of professionalism in nursing is the willingness to learn and develop. In any field of health care, education doesn't end after completing the degree course. She must be interested in actively keeping up-to-date with the latest medical research and nursing best practice.

### *Teamwork*

Teamwork is central to any health care career. It's essential for nurses to maintain collaborative and cooperative relationships with everyone from fellow nurses to doctors and consultants. Regardless of the personal feelings toward a colleague, they must put patients' well-being first and work closely and effectively with each team member. This involves effective communication, taking the time to help others, and showing moral support and solidarity with coworkers.

### *Integrity*

Every nurse must maintain complete integrity throughout her career. Nurses must know when to compromise in conflicts, and when to stand up for their beliefs. They must be able to advocate for their patients and consult



the appropriate people if they have any concerns within the workplace. However, they must also be self-aware and willing to assess where improvements can be made.

### *Honesty*

Another indicator of professionalism involves honesty. Nurses must be able to honestly explain to patients their diagnosis, prognosis and treatment, no matter how hard it is. Nurses also need to be humble enough to admit if they have made a mistake and put in the necessary steps to remedy the situation.

### *Unbiased Approach*

Nurses must have a good sense of ethics, and be able to treat every patient equally, regardless of their age, race, gender, condition or socio-economic background.

### *Work Ethics*

Nurses must follow professional ethics at work place. Working with children, youth and families is one of the most rewarding and at the same time challenging endeavors. It requires dedication, commitment, problem-solving skills, and a willingness to learn, change, and is flexible in order to address the multiple and often complex needs of various individuals.

## CHALLENGES OF PROFESSIONALISM

### Personal Identity versus Professional Identity

The terms, profession, professional, professional identity, and professionalism are quoted many times in nursing and medical field that are often used interchangeably. According to the American philosopher **Mortimer J. Adler**, a professional is a man or woman who does skilled work to achieve a useful social goal. In other words, the essential characteristic of a profession is the dedication of its members to the service they perform.

Similarly, Burke states that identities are the meanings that individuals hold for themselves that defines who they are. According to Brooke four are three types of identities. These include:

1. **Social identity:** These identities have bases in being members of groups or some organizations.
2. **Role identity:** It is based upon performing certain roles or work in the society like social worker.
3. **Personal identity:** It is based upon certain biological entities or qualities of an individual.
4. **Professional identity:** It is the base of professionalism and it provides the ethical frameworks within which professionals work. Having a strong professional identity enables professionals to consider their values and how they relate to the behaviors that are expected from them by their profession, colleagues and patients. In simple words professional identity is the degree to which an individual identifies with his or her professional group.

### Definition of Professional Identity

Professional identity is defined as “the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills shared with others within a professional group”.

Professional identity in nursing is a sense of oneself that is influenced by the characteristics, norms and values of the nursing discipline, resulting in the individual thinking, acting and feeling like a nurse.

Nurses begin to develop a professional identity in nursing school by embracing the core values of nursing through engagement with student peers, nursing faculty, and patients. Students integrate critical thinking and clinical reasoning with these core values as they begin to think, feel, and perform like a nurse.

### Personal Identity

Personal identity is the unique numerical identity of a person over time. The term personal identity means different things to different people. Psychologists use it to refer to a person's self-image to one's beliefs about how the person perceives oneself and how one differs from others.

In philosophy personal identity normally refers to philosophical questions about oneself that include topics such as the nature of self-knowledge, self-deception, rationality, and the will.

## **SELF-INTEGRITY**

### Importance of Self-Integrity

Living a life of integrity means that one never has to spend time or energy questioning to self. When one listens to the heart and does the right thing, life becomes simple. Our life and our actions are open for everyone to see, and one doesn't have to worry about hiding anything. The following are the characteristics and importance of self-integrity:

- Integrity helps to gain the trust of one's leaders, colleagues and team. When the individual holds himself accountable for his actions, he becomes a role model for others to follow.
- Integrity helps to get success in life. If the individual does his day-to-day work with integrity, it shows his honesty which allows him to get promotion and growth.
- After applying integrity concepts, the person is going to be more ethical and humbler toward others, and every organization always wants someone trustworthy in its management positions, which also deals with the problem with ease and patience.

### Preservation of Self-Integrity

Self-integrity is about being true to the values that one stands for in life. It is shown through the actions of the individual. The individual may claim to have a set of values or beliefs, but if they are not reflected in his actions, then he/she lacks self-integrity. In simple words, integrity is doing the right thing when no one is watching and even when the choice isn't easy. Integrity is staying true to self and to own words, even when one has to face serious consequences for the choices that he is making.

Self-integrity is not based on external commitments to those around a person rather it is commitment to self.

### Steps of Preserving Self-Integrity

Integrity of a person determines reputation of the individual according to a Japanese proverb that confirms that the reputation of a thousand years may be determined by the conduct of one hour. A single bad choice is enough to destroy a lifetime's worth of integrity.

The following are steps of preserving the integrity:

### *Define Personal Values*

Individuals can't live by values if they do not know what they truly believe in. The first step of maintaining integrity is to start, by defining the core values. These are the values that the person is not going to compromise irrespective of the consequence.

### *Analyze Every Choice*

It is the tendency of human beings to make bad choices and to cut short their work when they know they are not being observed or are under supervision. Preserving the integrity means that it does matter that the individual is under supervision or not even then he/she is making right choices and following morally and ethically right practices. Honesty and integrity aren't values that the individuals should practice according to their convenience rather these are the values that individuals should practice all the time and to preserve integrity every action and choice should be analyzed thoroughly.

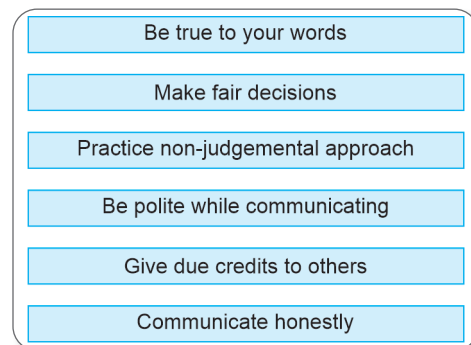
### *Encourage Integrity*

People with integrity have characteristics, like being humble, a strong sense of self, high self-esteem, and self-confidence. These characteristics are of utmost important as sometimes an individual may be under intense pressure from others to make the wrong choice. Therefore, the individual should focus upon improving these characteristics so that one has the strength and courage to do the right thing when the time comes. Develop friendships and work relationships with others who demonstrate integrity, especially at work place.

## Essential Qualities to Preserve Integrity

The following are the essential qualities to preserve integrity (Fig. 1.3):

- **Be true to your words:** It means if one tells or gives a promise at a particular time, do that on time. Do not procrastinate.
- **Make fair decisions:** It indicates that don't be in a hurry for making decisions, always take time and analyze it.
- **Practice non-judgmental approach:** Do not judge people and take decisions. Use non-judgmental approach while dealing with the clients/patients.
- **Be polite while communicating:** It means do not be a bold leader. Try to be a soft one who listens to everyone and keeps sympathy toward others. Don't take a decision directly, take some time and know the problem.
- **Give due credit to others:** Here it only means don't be a selfish, try to give the credits to the team members where needed.
- **Communicate honestly:** With honesty, everything looks good and pure. Try to practice this quality and make everyone feel good. It will make the working environment suitable, and will also help to increase the efficiency.



**Figure 1.3:** Qualities to preserve integrity

## THREATS TO INTEGRITY IN NURSING

Ethical standards exist in every profession. Integrity is a key element that every profession considers appropriate for ethical behavior. Any patient undergoing any type of treatment would not like to choose a physician, nurse or any health care professionals who are lacking in integrity.

The following are the main threats to integrity:

### Deceiving Patients, Withholding Information and Falsifying the Records

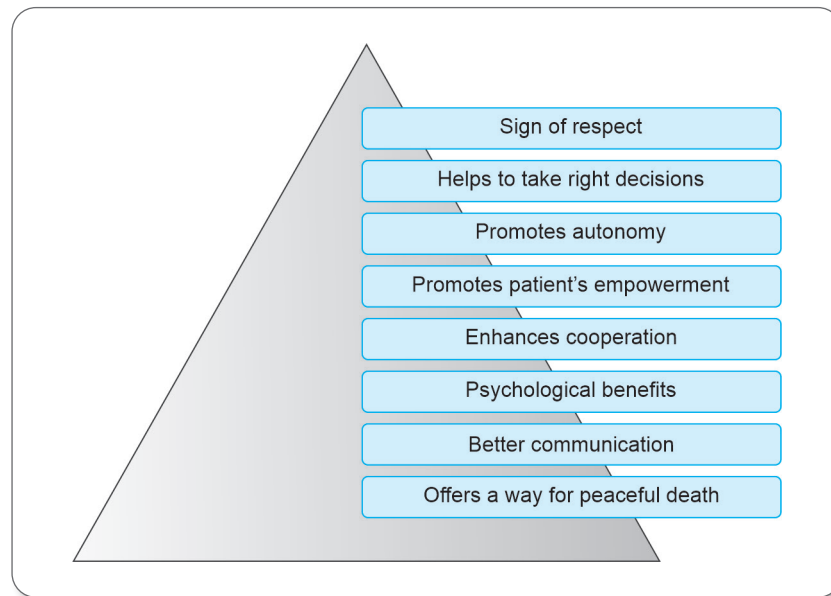
Health professionals are expected to always tell the truth to their patients simply because it is the right thing to do. Trust is an essential element in the nurse-patient relationship and health professionals should never engage in such behavior that undermines trust. For example, doctors should do their best to explain treatment procedures to their patients and strive to help patients understand their nature and purpose. Taking such measures help to minimize the risk of unpleasant experiences for patients, which can lead to a sense of betrayal. Similarly, confidentiality is of utmost importance to maintain the relationship between nurses and their patients. In health care profession, deception is a matter of concern as ethically health professionals should not intentionally deceive their patients.

**The American Medical Association states:** “A physician shall be honest in all professional interactions, and strive to report physicians engaging in fraud or deception, to appropriate entities”.

People define deception in different ways. For some doctors, withholding dismal facts about a terminal prognosis is not deception as they think that it will keep the patient's morale high. On the other hand, others will disagree and call this deceptive.

### Importance of Telling Truth to the Patients/Clients (Fig. 1.4)

- **Sign of respect:** One of the most important values to being truthful is associated with respect for the patient as a person who is able to make decision. This is because, to determine a course of action and governance of care for a patient, the patient requires truthful information.
- **Helps to take right decision:** The provision of truthful information to patients is one way to enable them to make correct decisions which benefit their overall health. Telling rather than withholding information will allow a patient to plan his care, seek other opinions and put personal and financial affairs in order.
- **Promotes autonomy:** Without knowledge of the truth, it would be uncertain whether patients can make informed decisions and would lead to failure of health professionals to respect them as autonomous individuals. Lying is held to be a breach of the autonomy of the person, and this contradicts concepts such as patient empowerment, shared decision-making and patient-centered care.
- **Promotes patients' empowerment:** This is essentially significant to a health professional obtaining informed consent, whereby the potential risks involved in the proposed treatment and intervention needs to be disclosed truthfully. For providing consent to any health intervention, a person requires sufficient and truthful information to make an informed and conscious choice. Patients cannot make effective decisions without truthful information.
- **Enhances cooperation:** Those patients who are well informed tend to more cooperate and collaborate with health professionals. As the patients know their diagnosis and prognosis, they can tolerate the treatment and the pain more positively. Meanwhile, in the absence of disclosure, harm may result from not seeking the right treatment.



**Figure 1.4:** Importance of telling truth to the patients

- **Psychological benefits:** In terms of psychological benefit, knowing one's prognosis and diagnosis is far less debilitating than worrying about the unknown because patients, who are not given the opportunity to reveal their own fears and worries, may be left anxious. As a result, avoidance of communication about the reality of a patient's situation may actually expose the patient to considerable psychological distress.
- **Better communication:** Informing patients about the truth about a life-threatening disease does not result in a greater incidence of anxiety, despair, sadness, depression, insomnia or fear. In fact, informed patients engage in better communication with health professionals, resulting in greater trust in the care provided.
- **Offers a way for peaceful death:** It is alleged that not informing patients of the natural course of their illnesses deprives them of what is called a good death.

### Challenges of Telling Truth to the Patients

- In some cases, patients prefer not to be told or have full information of their health conditions, of a serious diagnosis, but would rather wish a family member be informed. In other words, some are happy to not get the unpleasant information and are satisfied to leave the decision making to the health professional or family.
- To force or exert the truthful information on someone who might not be ready to deal with the impact of the information can be seen as possible damage to the relationship between the health professionals, the patient and the family.
- In any health care codes of ethics, it is generally established that health professionals ought to respect their patients' wishes and preferences. This respect of wishes is not just about the patient's right to know, but extends to respect a patient's right not to know. For example, in patients with conditions of cognitive deficit such as dementia, it remains debatable if they are entitled to be told the truth in the first place.

- Generally, it is perceived as justifiable to withhold information from certain patients and not tell the truth to patients who appear incompetent in accepting the information, or who have cognitive defects.
- This is in particular relevant to the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence which are used to justify for not telling the truth to patients. Ethics suggest that telling lies may potentially lead to physical and psychological harm, but if, by telling lies offer greater benefits to patient, than causing harm then it can be justified.
- One should promote beneficence instead whilst taking into account one's primary duty not to harm patients. For example, when a nurse, puts medication to a patient's food, is an elderly patient with cognitive impairment, being acutely disturbed and represents a significant risk of harm to him or to others. Of course, the issue of covert administration of medication given to an autonomous individual against his or her will is both legally and ethically unacceptable. The presence or the true nature of the medication was denied because truthful disclosure would cause the patient to refuse the drug, which could result in a negative outcome with regards to the patient's treatment. Indeed, telling the patient about truth can sometimes appear to be more harmful to the patient and it may be justified for the nurse to withhold information.

Health professionals are expected to always tell the truth. This is based on the argument that lying is wrong and disrespecting the person's autonomy is not right. However, this may not necessarily be the case, as the right not to know the truth, should as well be respected by them. When conflict arises, a line ought to be drawn between respecting one's autonomy for the truth of information and the promotion of the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence. Whilst physical and psychological implications of telling the truth to patients are addressed accordingly, it needs further consideration on both the harm of lies and the harm of telling the truth.

### Falsifying Records

Falsifying documents is the act of intentionally changing or modifying information on a document with the intention of misleading a person or an institution. Maintaining the accuracy of medical records is the duty of all nurses. Records of medical care and events should be created in an accurate and timely manner while a patient is in a hospital and completed at the time of discharge. Falsifying a medical record is a crime punishable by a fine or even jail time.

The following are the examples of falsifying or tempering the medical records in nursing profession:

- Documenting medications that weren't given
- Noting that a patient ate a full meal when he/she didn't have it
- Filling in someone else's omissions
- Signing someone else's name
- Recording care not given
- Fabricating data
- Destroying or hiding records or parts of records
- Removing a diagnostic report
- Inserting information without standard documentation
- Rewriting or destroying the record
- Omitting significant facts
- Creating records for nonexistent patients or staff
- Failing to record important details or events

## Reporting of Falsified Documentation

- Follow the policy of the institute to report falsified documentation to the immediate supervisor.
- Fill out an incident report, which will be sent to the appropriate officer. Incident report should be a clear and chronologically arranged.
- A jury might consider that intentional medical record alteration, falsification, or destruction by health care professionals demonstrates malice and award punitive damages even if the tampering didn't directly cause patient injury. The nurse who falsifies the record could lose her license and possibly may get punishment as per law of the state.

## Consequences of Falsifying Medical Records

- Falsification of a medical record with any kind of alteration or destruction is considered tampering with evidence in a medical malpractice case.
- A medical practitioner could lose his license to practice medicine if a court of law determines a tendency to falsify medical records.
- Health care providers may also lose accreditation, eligibility, and loss of trust if they are found to have falsified a patient's medical record.
- Knowingly falsifying medical records is a felony crime with a potential fine or five years in prison.
- In addition to compensating the victim, a court may order punitive damages to discourage the falsification of medical records.

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF MEDICAL RECORDS

Confidentiality is an important component of the rights of the patient. The hospital is legally bound to maintain the confidentiality of the personal medical records. The patient can claim negligence against the hospital or the doctor for a breach of confidentiality. The maintenance of confidentiality is an important issue in the era of electronic data storage. There should be checks in place so that only those who are authorized can access the patient data.

Medical records can be used as a personal or impersonal document.

**Personal document:** This information is confidential and should not be released without the consent of the patient except in some specific situations. However, there are certain situations where it is legal for the authorities to give patient information.

They are as follows:

- During referral
- Demanded by the court or by the police on a written requisition
- Demanded by insurance companies as provided by the Insurance Act when the patient has relinquished his rights on taking the insurance
- Required for specific provisions of Workmen's Compensation cases, Consumer Protection cases, or for Income tax authorities.

**Impersonal document:** The record loses its identity as a personal document and patient's permission is not required. The impersonal documents have been used for research purposes as the identity of the patient is not revealed. Though the identity of the patient is not revealed, the research team is privy to patient records

and a cause of concern about the confidentiality of information. Historically, such research has been exempt from an ethics review and researchers have not been required to obtain informed consent from patients before using their records. Recently, a need has been felt to regulate the use of medical records in research, effectively restricting the manner in which this type of research is conducted. An ethics review is required for using the patient data. However, this is not widely followed all over India.

### **Medical Council of India Guidelines for Preserving the Records**

- There are no definite guidelines in India regarding how long to retain medical records.
- The hospitals follow their own pattern retaining the records for varied periods of time.
- Under the provisions of the Limitation Act 1963 and Section 24A of the Consumer Protection Act 1986, which dictate the time within which a complaint has to be filed, it is advisable to maintain records for 2 years for outpatient records and 3 years for inpatient and surgical cases. However, the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act allow for condoning the delay in appropriate cases. This means that the records may be needed even after 3 years.
- It is important to note that in pediatric cases a medical negligence case can be filed by the child after acquiring the age of majority.
- The Medical Council of India guidelines also insist on preserving the inpatient records in a standard Performa for 3 years from the commencement of treatment.
- The records that are the subject of medico-legal cases should be maintained until the final disposal of the case even though only a complaint or notice is received.
- It is necessary that the Government frames guidelines for the duration for which medical records are preserved by the hospitals so that hospitals are protected from unnecessary litigation in issues of medical records.
- The provisions of specific Acts like the Pre Conception Prenatal Diagnostic Test Act, 1994 (PNDT), Environmental Protection Act, etc. necessitate proper maintenance of records that have to be retained for periods as specified in the Act. Section 29 of the PNDT Act, 1994 requires that all the documents be maintained for a period of 2 years or until the disposal of the proceedings. The PNDT Rules, 1996 require that when the records are maintained on a computer, a printed copy of the record should be preserved after authentication by the person responsible for such record.

### **COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH TEAM MEMBERS**

Patient care today is more complicated than ever due to increasingly chronic conditions such as diabetes, cancer, arthritis, and Alzheimer's or kidney disease. Because these illnesses are complex, there is a need for specialized care, which has resulted in a multidisciplinary approach to treating patients.

Medical teams are made up of different members like nurses, physicians and other health care professionals. It is important that they clearly and effectively communicate with one another to build strong work relationships, share resources and solve problems. Health care team members focus on patient-centered care by doing the following:

- Cooperating with one another
- Exchanging information
- Integrating electronic medical records



- Providing timely informed consent
- Health care teams have a common purpose to provide safe, optimal patient care with successful outcomes through communication and collaboration.

### **Importance of Communication in the Team Work**

Teams that consist of nurses, physicians and other staff can reduce morbidity rates while increasing patient and health care worker satisfaction. By working cohesively in an effective manner, health care teams can accomplish the following goals:

- When teams coordinate care, they decrease the level of stress among patients.
- Teamwork may reduce the number of issues related to burnout in nurses. As team members, nurses are not the sole providers of care, so they do not carry the entire responsibility for a patient's health. They have the support of their teammates to help them make decisions.
- Enhance patient safety.
- Improve clinical performance.
- Cut down on medical errors.
- Ease patient concerns about treatments and procedures.
- Raise efficiency and lower health care costs.

### **Important Communication Skills for Nurses**

It is imperative that nurses competently communicate with team members. Great communication skills include:

- Active listening
- Awareness of nonverbal cues
- Confidence
- Flexibility
- Constructive feedback
- Honesty and courtesy
- Empathy
- Verbal clarity
- Stay relaxed
- Make eye contact
- Smile
- Sit while facing the patient
- Refrain from making judgments or criticizing the patient
- Keep from interrupting patients while they are talking, and wait for pauses to ask questions
- Repeat back to patients what they have said

### **Relationship with Patients and Society**

Nurses advocate for health promotion, educate patients and the public on the prevention of illness and injury, provide care and assist in cure, participate in rehabilitation, and provide support. No other health care professional has such a broad and far-reaching role as the nurses do.

Nurse-patient relationships have proven to affect the health-related outcome of the patient. These positive therapeutic relationships encompass showing empathy, building trust, advocating for the patient, providing knowledgeable feedback, and responding to the patient's unmet needs. This type of professional relationship can enhance the patient's satisfaction.

### The Importance of Establishing a Patient and Nurse Relationship

For nurses it's vital that they know how to establish healthy relationships with the patients they interact with day-to-day. Maintaining therapeutic relationships is good for the patient, as well as also beneficial for the mental health of the nurses. For nurses, finding a balance between compassionate care and professionalism is the key in order to connect with the individuals they are treating.

### Therapeutic Nurse-Patient Relationship

At the core of nursing is the therapeutic nurse-client relationship. Nurses establish and maintain this relationship by using nursing knowledge and skills, as well as applying caring attitudes and behaviors. The five key components of the therapeutic nurse-client relationship are professional intimacy, power, empathy, respect and trust.

Regardless of the context, length of interaction and whether the nurse is the primary or secondary care provider, these components are always present and have been discussed as follows:

**Professional intimacy:** It is very important in the care and services that nurses provide. It may be the physical activities, such as bathing the client that create professional closeness with her patients. Professional intimacy may involve psychological, spiritual and social elements that are identified in the plan of care.

**Power:** The nurse-client relationship is one of unequal power. This power imbalance arises from the nurse having more authority and influence in the health care system, specialized knowledge, access to privileged information, and the ability to advocate for the client and the client's significant other. If a nurse misuses the power in the relationship, it is considered abuse.

**Empathy:** It refers to expressing an understanding of what the health care experience means from the client's perspective. It includes validating and resonating with the meaning of that experience.

**Respect:** It is the recognition of the inherent dignity, worth and uniqueness of every individual, regardless of the client's socio-economic status and personal attributes, and the nature of the client's health problem.

**Trust:** It is critical in the nurse-client relationship because the client is in a vulnerable position. At the beginning of a relationship, trust is fragile so it's especially important to keep promises to a client. It's difficult to re-establish trust once it has been breached.

### Ways to Develop Therapeutic Nurse-Patient Relationship

- Greet the patient and give your introduction. Ask the patient to tell something interesting about themselves. This shows excellent interpersonal skills and a desire to know them as a person as well as a patient.
- Practice effective communication by maintaining eye contact and repeating what the patient has told the nurse. Perfecting the communication skills will not only improve patient relationship, but it will also improve the overall patient experience. That way, they know someone is indeed listening and understanding while still maintaining professional boundaries.

- Enhance the quality of the patient's experience. Ensure their basic needs are met and that they are comfortable.
- As a medical professional, non-verbal communication skills are just as important as verbal communication for patient care.
- Spend a bit longer time to interact with them and their loved ones. This will allow building rapport and creating a personal relationship with the patient while connecting with them on a more emotional level.
- Another way to build a great nurse and patient relationship is to make the patient laugh. Laughter is a positive interaction that can play a role in bringing light to a bad situation. They may have some concerns about their medical bills, their mental health might be at risk due to stress, or they could still be in pain after a treatment.
- As a nurse practitioner or health care worker, one can still be caring and comforting while also maintaining a professional relationship with a new or former patient.

### Relationship with Society

A mutually beneficial relationship exists between nursing and society. The profession of nursing grew out of a need within society and continues to evolve based on the needs of society. Because nursing has a responsibility to society, the interest of the profession must be perceived as serving the interests of society.

**Nurses help the society in the following ways:**

- Nurses help families to learn become healthy by helping them understand the range of emotional, physical, mental and cultural experiences they encounter during health and illness.
- Nurses help people and their families cope with illness, deal with it, and if necessary live with it, so that other parts of their lives can continue.
- Nurses do more than care for individuals. They have always been at the forefront of change in health care and public health.

## **PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Professional conduct refers to the manners which guide the nurses how to behave professionally. The code of professional conduct for nurses is a set of expected standards of a country. Profession of nursing has a commitment that is shared with other health care professions to ensure efficient and high quality health services.

### Code of Ethics for Nurses in India

#### *Care Without Discrimination*

- Nurses must provide care to their clients without consideration of caste, creed, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic, political status, personal attributes, or any other grounds.
- While caring the patients, nurses must consider the personal beliefs, values and cultural sensitivities of the patients.
- Nurses should develop and promote trustworthy relationship with their clients.

- Nurses should respect and recognize distinctiveness of response of each client to interventions and must adapt accordingly.

#### *Respect the Rights of Individuals*

- Nurses should respect individuals' right to make decisions about their health status.
- Nurses must give adequate and accurate information to the client to enable them to take right decision.
- Nurses should respect the decisions made by individuals regarding their care.
- Nurses must advocate for protecting the vulnerable individuals.
- Nurse must respect the right to privacy of the personal information and must maintain confidentiality of privileged information except in life-threatening situations.
- Nurses must take informed consent while sharing information quality assurance or legal reasons.
- Special precautions must be taken to limit the access of all personal records written and computerized to authorize persons only.

#### *Render Quality Nursing Care*

- In order to provide quality nursing care, nurses must upgrade themselves through continuing education and utilize all opportunities for self-development.
- Nursing care must be provided only by registered (professional) nurse.
- Nurses must strive to maintain quality nursing care and uphold the standards of care.
- Nurses should value the importance of research as a mean of development of nursing profession and participates in nursing research adhering to ethical principles.

#### *Adhere to Practice within the Framework of Ethical, Professional and Legal Boundaries Laid by Professional Organization*

- Nurses must follow the code of ethics and code of professional conduct for nurses in India developed by Indian Nursing Council.
- Nurses must also be familiar with relevant laws and practices in accordance with the law of the state or province in which they are practicing.

#### *Harmonious Relationship with the Health Care Team*

- Nurse must cooperate, coordinate and collaborate with the members of the health team to meet the needs of society.
- They must appreciate the team efforts in rendering care.

### **Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in India**

#### *Adherence to Professional Responsibility and Accountability*

- Nurses must carry out responsibilities within the framework of the professional boundaries.
- Nurses are accountable for maintaining practice standards set by Indian Nursing Council.
- Nurses are accountable for each decisions and actions taken by them while caring their patients.

- Nurses must be compassionate toward their duties.
- Nurses are responsible for continuous improvement of current professional practices.

#### *Adherence to Set Standards of Nursing Practice*

- Nurses must provide care in accordance with the set standards of practice and always ensure safe practice.
- Must treat all individuals and families with dignity while providing physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of care.
- Must respect individuals and families according to their traditional and cultural practices.
- Nurses should promote healthy practices and discourage harmful practices.
- Nurses should provide realistic and trustworthy information in all situations and must promote and facilitate in the decision-making process by the individuals or their families.
- Nurses should encourage and promote the participation of individuals and others in the nursing care process.
- While caring the nurses should always consults, coordinate, collaborate and follow up appropriately.

#### *Maintenance of Good Interpersonal Relationships*

- Nurses must establish and maintain effective interpersonal relationships with individuals, families and communities.
- Nurses must uphold the dignity of team members and maintain effective interpersonal relationship with them.
- Nurses must cooperate with other health professionals to meet the needs of the individuals, families and communities.

#### *Advocacy for Human Rights*

- Nurses must encourage and support individuals in their right to speak for themselves on issues affecting their health and welfare.
- They must gather relevant facts while taking conscience decisions in the best interest of individuals.
- They must respect and support the decision or choices made by individuals.
- They must take appropriate action to protect individuals from harmful unethical practices.

#### *Facilitation of Conducive Work Culture*

- Nurses must facilitate conducive work culture in order to achieve institutional objectives.
- Nurse must ensure appropriate allocation and utilization of available resources.
- Must participate in supervision and education of students and other formal care providers.
- Nurses must be able to communicate effectively following appropriate channels of communication.
- They must participate in professional activities, like performance appraisal, evaluation of nursing services, in policy decisions, following the principle of equity and accessibility of services.
- They must work in collaboration with individuals to identify their needs and sensitize policy makers and funding agencies for resource allocation.

### *Upgradation of Professional Development*

- Nurse must contribute to the development of nursing practice.
- They must take responsibility for updating own knowledge and competencies.
- They should contribute to core of professional knowledge by conducting and participating in research.

### *Adhering to Policies, Rules and Regulation of the Institutions*

Policies, rules and regulation are fundamental for consistency across an institution for both staff and consumers. They guide the institution, influencing and determining all major decisions and actions, and reduce liability risks. Policies and procedures should be widely accessible and cover all activities carried out by the institution.

Policies, rules and regulation are the first things an institute should establish in order to operate effectively. Policies are rules, guidelines and principles that communicate an organization's culture, values and philosophies.

Policies include:

- Employee entitlement and what they can expect from the organization
- What the organization expects from their employees
- What consumers and the community can expect from the organization

### *Adhering to Policies, Rules and Regulation of the Institutions in Nursing Profession*

To be identified as a profession, a discipline must meet criteria that include having established standards of practice and regulation of the practice. In the profession of nursing, regulation is an important component in ensuring safe and competent practice. Confidence is supported when nurses thoroughly understand and comply with all regulations and standards.

As nursing practice has a significant impact on health care delivery, patient safety and patient outcomes, regulation of the profession and individual nursing practice all are necessary. The practice of nursing is regulated at the state level through administrative rules (laws) and civil procedures. Licensure is one method of validating knowledge and competence. Individual states license and regulate the profession through their nursing boards, while the National Council of Nursing (Indian Nursing Council) works to create uniformity and consistency in nursing practice and standards.

Issues related to regulations, standards and compliance with nurse practice act and scope of practice are not always well understood by nurses and sometimes they do not gain the expected level of knowledge, compliance and value. Policies and procedures provide guidance, standardization and consistency in practices, and failure to comply places the nurse, patient and institution at risk.

### Purpose of Policies and Procedures

Formalized, written policies and procedures fulfill a number of important purposes:

- Facilitate adherence with recognized professional practices.
- Promote compliance with regulations, statutes, and accreditation requirements.
- Reduce practice variation.
- Standardize practices across multiple entities within a single a health system.
- Serve as a resource for staff, particularly new personnel.

## Importance of Policies and Procedures

The main purpose of health care policy and procedures is to provide standardization in daily operational activities. Policies and procedures are essential in providing clarity, when dealing with issues and activities that are critical to health and safety, legal liabilities and regulatory requirements. Policy in health care is vitally important as it sets a general plan of action used to guide desired outcomes and is a fundamental guideline to help make decisions. Policies and procedures help employees to understand their roles and responsibilities within the organization. In the health care environment specifically, policy should set the foundation for the delivery of safe and cost effective quality care.

## PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTES AND BEHAVIORS

**Meaning of etiquette:** Etiquettes are the set of rules or customs that control accepted behavior in particular social groups or social institutions, for instance using the words “Please” and “Thank you” while communication with others.

Professional etiquette is critical for presenting oneself as a polished, confident, and professional nurse. More than the most of the careers, nursing profession is characterized by professional relationships among different people in numerous settings (Fig. 1.5).

The following are the main professional etiquettes while dealing with the patients:

**Introduction round:** A nurse must introduce herself in a confident voice. Stand up, lean forward, and make eye contact, while delivering any services to the patient. Telling the name to the people one regularly interacts with sharing a little about herself helps to make trustworthy and stronger relationships. This applies not only to the patients but also to other nurses, doctors and administrative staff in the hospital.

**Avoid controversial topics:** To avoid inadvertently offending someone, stay away from controversial topics such as religion and politics. When talking with a patient, remember that nurses are the caregiver not the decision makers.

**Observe body language:** When making conversation, don't forget that nonverbal communication is also equally important. Stand tall with shoulders back and chin up; avoid slouching and keep your hands out of your pockets. Use a sincere smile to convey warmth and friendliness. Look at the eyes of the person you are talking with to show your interest.

**Emphasize positive work environment:** Be polite and courteous to the health care team as well as the patients and their families in spite of the stressful situation. When one shows respect for others and makes others feel valued, they contribute to effective communication and team building. Nothing inspires confidence and warm feelings more quickly than a positive attitude.

**Follow proper dress code:** The dress code of the nurses should not be too casual and they must be properly dressed up. Nurses should make sure that uniform, lab coat, scrubs, and shoes are clean and dress is according to hospital policy. Clothes should neither be too tight or too short and if hair is long, it should be tied up properly. The name tag of the nurse should be visible and readable.



**Figure 1.5:** Professional etiquettes toward patient



**Make a professional image:** The nurses must maintain and exercise professional etiquettes and it must be a part of everyday practice.

**Proper written communication:** Although the majority of the daily interactions occur face-to-face, but if it is to be done in writing, it is essential that nurses maintain a professional tone in her communication. Poorly written communication may demonstrate lack of professionalism and seriousness toward job.

## PROFESSIONAL GROOMING

Grooming is the combination of style and discipline. It is to project an image of an institution culture and ethics to the clients or consumers. It also enhances the personality of employee, character of an organization and value of the institution. Proper grooming and professional appearance are important to gain respect in the workplace. The way one looks and carries oneself creates an impression on the people and one work alongside.

The following are the main points for maintaining professional grooming:

### Personal Hygiene

- Maintaining a comfortable environment in which all employees can work in, is an important part of work culture. However, sometimes poor hygiene from employees can affect the overall performance of a team or impact on their colleagues and other people, particularly patients, with whom an individual comes in to contact.
- Keeping clean is essential for good health; poor hygiene can cause skin complaints, unpleasant smells and bacterial or parasitic infections; poor dental care can also give rise to bad breath. Unwashed clothes are often a source of undesirable smells.
- Staff members should come to work having attended to their personal hygiene (Fig. 1.6) each day with clean clothes and hair and free from unpleasant odors.



**Figure 1.6:** Personal hygiene

### Uniform and Dress Code

When one hears the word uniform, it often gives impression of a very specific style. Dressing appropriately in the workplace specifically has everything to do with meeting expectations. Clean uniform should be worn each day and replaced if it becomes soiled during a shift (Fig. 1.7).





**Figure 1.7:** Uniform and dress code

The following points must be kept in mind while on duty in hospital/clinical settings:

- Dress code of the staff varies from hospital to hospital, examples of acceptable staff clothing include, skirts, blouses, smart shirts (with collars—long or short sleeve) or tops, jumpers jackets, suits, trousers, sports jackets and blazers. However the common dress code of nurses in most of the hospitals in India is white/green salwar suit with white apron and name plate attached to the apron.
- Track suits, casual sports t-shirts, combat trousers, sweat shirts, baseball caps/hats, jeans or denim clothing, overly tight or revealing clothes, including mini-skirts/shorts, tops revealing the midriff and leggings, low-cut blouses/tops and strappy tops, skirts/trousers that are sufficiently long that they touch the ground when walking are not acceptable on safety and hygiene grounds. Clothing bearing large and/or inappropriate slogans should also be avoided.
- Shoes must be black, closed toe, low heel with a non-slip sole and should have low noise soles in clinical areas. Sandals, flip-flops and crocs or similar are not allowed. Footwear must be safe, sensible, and stable, in good order, be smart and clean in regard to health and safety considerations.
- Certain jobs require staff to wear personal protective wear. Administration of the hospital must ensure that personal protective clothing and equipment is available to the employee in accordance with the regulations and local/statutory recommendations. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is to be worn in accordance with the Standard Precaution Policy.
- Visible tattoos are to be discouraged. Where they are present they should not be offensive to others and where they are deemed to be offensive they should be appropriately covered if possible.
- Jewellery and piercing should be discreet and appropriate and should not be offensive or health and safety or an infection control hazard. Any items of jewellery and piercing that create the potential for injury or present the possibility for entanglement (e.g., large hoops) must be covered or removed during working hours or when working within a clinical setting.
- Jewellery must be kept to a minimum; a wedding/plain band ring (without stone(s)) is permitted.
- Wristwatches or other wristbands or bracelets must not be worn when providing clinical care. Watches should be removed to facilitate hand washing that involves any patient contact.

- Hair should be clean, neat and tidy at all times. In clinical areas hair should be worn above the collar or tied back if it falls below the shoulder. Beards should be short and neatly trimmed or secured to avoid patient contact.
- All staff should dress and wear clothing that makes hand hygiene both easy and satisfactory. This means no long sleeves (e.g., jackets) and shirts must be either short sleeved or sleeves are rolled up to the elbow.
- When moving patients, pens and scissors, etc. should be carried in pockets to avoid causing any injury to patient.
- Staffs who are pregnant should continue to observe the dress code and not wear overly tight or revealing clothing.
- Staffs who wear facial coverings for religious reasons are expected to remove them while on duty. This will ensure that the member of staff is identifiable. Facial/body piercing is not to be worn when providing clinical care.
- The uniform should be worn in a clean and presentable fashion and all staff must have access to a spare uniform in case one becomes soiled during the shift.
- If uniform is worn on the way to and from work it must be covered by a coat or suitable garment. If possible, it is preferable for staff to change of their uniform before and after their shift.
- Minimum makeup should be worn. Nail varnish and false nails are not permitted. Nails should be sufficiently short to ensure safe patient contact and infection control.
- Staff is expected to comply fully with the smoke-free policy and understand that smoking in uniform may affect patient care due to the smell and possible infection control issues. If staff does smoke off-site they have to ensure their uniform is fully covered and failure to comply with this instruction will be treated as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- Uniforms need to be washed at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric. A 10-minute wash at 60°C or washing with detergent at lower temperatures down to 30°C removes almost all microorganisms.
- The appearance of staff will help the patient to feel at ease and in safe hands. The Trust portrays a corporate image in its staff. Smart, polite staff immediately gives the impression of a sympathetic environment.
- Staff is expected to comply with the policy and also comply with regulatory and good practice requirements.

## **PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES, PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH PATIENTS, CARE GIVERS AND TEAM MEMBERS**

Professional boundaries are the legal, ethical and organizational frameworks that protect both clients and employees, or workers, from physical and emotional harm, and help to maintain a safe working environment.

Professional boundaries are the limits to the relationship between someone in a professional role and the person in his/her care, the borders that mark the edges between a professional relationship and a personal relationship. They are like the riverbanks to the river, allowing work to take place, in a defined space.

### **Importance of Professional Boundaries**

- Provides safety for both the worker and the client.
- Reduces client/worker anxiety as rules and roles are clear.
- Increases well-being of the worker.
- Provides a therapeutic environment underpinned by mutual respect.

## **Poor Professional Boundaries**

As professional, one cannot hope to be effective if his relationship with patients is too cold or distant, so it is often a matter of striking just the right balance. Frontline workers often develop close relationships with people and it is sometimes difficult to draw precise lines about what sort of behavior is appropriate. In all relationships individual has to set limits. Each individual has a boundary around him that defines who he is as an individual. The strength of the boundary depends on the relationship with the other person and on the context of that relationship. One of the key issues for professionals is to be able to recognize when they may be crossing the invisible line which separates a client from a worker and which defines the relationship as professional.

Boundary crossing is a decision to deviate from an established boundary and therapeutic relationships. For instance, pediatric nurses who become attached to a patient may believe that she knows best and steps in to make decisions rather than letting the patient's family to do so. Like when a child is ready to be discharged and the nurse doesn't believe the parents, who've always cared for the child's needs are appropriate caregivers and refuses to discharge the patient. Or, if the same nurse calls to check up on the patient after the hospitalization is over.

The examples of poor professional boundaries or crossing the professional boundaries include:

- Setting aside a lot of time for one particular patient/client.
- Showing favoritism or meeting a patient in areas besides those used to provide direct patient care.
- Staying back after hours with a particular patient/client on a regular basis.
- Meeting a patient/client socially on a regular basis.
- Giving personal or irrelevant details about own life.
- Becoming aware that a client will do whatever you suggest, without question.
- Becoming aware of sexual attraction to a client.
- Becoming aware of strong attachment to a client.
- Becoming aware of strong feelings of dislike for a client.
- Accommodating a patient with a convenient appointment by going out of his/her way.
- Disclosing personal information to reassure the patient.
- Accepting gifts from the patient.
- Helping the patients by home health nurses with tasks outside their job description, such as washing dishes or doing laundry.
- Visiting a former patient after discharge to check on his/her progress.
- Involving in any verbal behavior that's seductive or sexually demeaning to a patient
- Using a patient as a means to meet a family member.
- Dependence of the patient on a particular staff member, frequently requesting the same caregiver, or asking other staff members about the same nurse.

### ***Consequences of Poor Professional Boundaries***

- Leads to potentially unsafe practice.
- Increases client/worker stress.
- Undermines the therapeutic relationship.
- Can compound clients' difficulties.

### *Maintenance of Professional Boundaries*

While working with patients, the goal should be to establish and maintain a professional and effective working relationship. The boundaries between the nurse and patients should be clear to both parties. Sometimes one needs to be very explicit, when he/she works with young people, especially if they are vulnerable or very manipulative.

The examples of maintaining professional boundaries may include:

- Not discussing a client's private health information with others.
- Keeping work contact numbers separate from personal contact numbers.
- Not performing additional favors for clients, outside of the scope of professional role.
- If one recognizes that his/her relationship with a patient is becoming too intimate or that one has too much power and control over a person, review relationship with the person and re-establish boundaries with the person by clarifying role.
- Alter workplace arrangements so that the client is shifted to other nurse.
- Take time to reflect on the quality of relationships outside of work and think that does the nurse have time to develop and nurture these relationships.
- Think carefully about the best interests of the client that they are being served.

### **Ways to Maintain Professional Boundaries and Develop Therapeutic Relationships**

Maintaining professional boundaries is always the nurse's responsibility. Trust, respect, professional intimacy, empathy and power are the five components inherent to the nurse-patient relationship. When a nurse suspects that he/she is involved in a situation that crosses the boundaries of the therapeutic nurse-client relationship, the nurse needs to take action to maintain or restore the professional boundaries. The primary concern is always for the safety and well-being of the patient.

Nurses manage the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship through:

- Self-reflection.
- Establishing and following a comprehensive plan of care.
- Meeting personal needs (for example, social support, companionship, approval) outside of the therapeutic nurse-patient relationship.
- Explaining and discussing the meaning of confidentiality with the patient.
- Being sensitive to the context in which care is provided (for example, in a patient's home, outside a traditional environment).
- Achieving a clear understanding with the patient about the duration and termination of the relationship.
- Helping clients to understand when their requests are beyond the limits of the therapeutic relationship.
- Seeking support and guidance from professional leaders when nurse has concerns relating to boundaries in therapeutic relationships.
- Recognizing variables such as the care setting, community influences, the needs of the person and the nature of care or therapy they require.

**ASSESS YOURSELF****Short Answer Questions**

1. Define profession and criteria of profession.
2. What are the indicators of professionalism?
3. Differentiate between concept of personal identity and professional identity.
4. Write about the professional etiquettes and behavior of nurses.
5. What is the importance of communication and relationship with team members?

**Long Answer Questions**

1. Explain nursing as profession.
2. Describe the characteristics of professionalism and also define it.
3. Explain the concept of professional grooming.
4. Elaborate on the professional boundaries and professional relationship with the patients.
5. Explain the concept of withholding information and falsifying the documents.

**Multiple Choice Questions**

1. **Code of ethics is:**
  - a. Code of ethics tell us that what is right and what is wrong
  - b. Code of ethics is a strict set of rules
  - c. Code of ethics tells the members what kind of conduct is expected of them as they practice
  - d. All of the above
2. **Use of code of ethics in nursing profession:**
  - a. Guides professional behavior
  - b. Prevents a nurse from practicing below the standard set by the code
  - c. Can be used to protect a nurse who is falsely accused of doing something wrong
  - d. All of the above
3. **The first code of ethics in nursing profession was adopted in:**

a. 1948	b. 1953
c. 1965	d. 1978
4. **The most recent revision of code of ethics in nursing took place in:**

a. 1953	b. 1973
c. 1985	d. 1992
5. **Code of ethics for a nurse includes; except:**
  - a. The primary responsibility of a nurse is to provide care to those people who require it
  - b. A nurse maintains a co-operative relationship with co-workers
  - c. A nurse is not responsible for maintaining highest standard of nursing care
  - d. The nurse shares with other citizens the responsibility for initiating and supporting action to meet the health needs of the public

**6. As per code of ethics in nursing profession, the responsibility of a nurse toward her profession is:**

- a. She should provide nursing care and earn money
- b. She should have sufficient knowledge regarding all the nursing procedures
- c. She should try to maintain highest standard of nursing profession
- d. She should provide nursing care to people without taking money

**7. The fundamental responsibility of a nurse is:**

- a. To promote health
- b. To prevent illness
- c. To alleviate suffering
- d. All of these

**Answer Key**

1. d      2. d      3. b      4. b      5. c      6. c      7. d

**Further Readings**

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# NOTES

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