

# Chapter 3

## Communication and Nursing Relationships

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### ABSTRACT

*Communication and relationships are central to nursing. The non-linear quality of communication is discussed and the challenge for nursing to carry quality communication into a technology enriched environment considered. Basic features of communication are laid out.*

### IMPORTANCE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP IN NURSING

According to Blumer (1969), human beings engage in interpretive interaction through their relationships with one another, and the process of human interaction is facilitated by symbols, words, interpretation and language (Denzin, 1989). Moreover, an individual's actions cannot be viewed solely as a result of one's own unique endeavors, as they are social acts that are not irrelevant from those of others. With human behavior being extremely regular, the patterns or regularity of behavior

cannot be comprehended without understanding social processes (Hewitt, 2001).

Nursing is an interpersonal process involving human beings, which is why ability to forge human relations bears considerable significance in the field of nursing. In particular, without effective communication, a therapeutic relationship between nurse and patient cannot be formulated nor can nursing intervention be performed. As a result, communication in nursing practice is being increasingly emphasized. In addition, communication abilities of nurses are critical in the sense that nurses must coordinate with various medical personnel for the provision of interdisciplinary cooperative medical services (Im, 2007). Also, communication is known to be a vital factor that

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impacts one's job satisfaction (Kim, Kim, Lee, 2001).

Communication is the essence of "care" and the channel by which nurses transfer care. Hewinson (1995) suggests that nurse-patient interaction is at the heart of caring relationships. In the interpersonal care theory, Kim (1997, p.61) defines "interpersonal caring" as "compassion-based therapeutic actions/behaviors through the collaborative partnership process developed between nurse and client." What the aforementioned implies is that communication is found to be crucial for nurses to exchange information and establish interaction-based relationships with not only patients who are the objects of nursing but also with other members of their relative organization.

Meanwhile, in an ultra information society, human relations suffer abnormalities. With an overemphasis on convenience and rapidity, individuals have become more impatient and some even slaves of the information media. That is why a neo humanistic society that attaches much importance to human relations is emerging. Albeit a small step, this change in society is calling for human relations with substance to be established.

Thus, the importance of interpersonal communication in nursing is increasingly underscored and even in an age of high technology, communication remains as an essential element of nursing, an indispensable tool for forming therapeutic relationships and a critical element for successful nursing intervention.

## **DEFINITION OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION**

Since the late 1940s, many researchers have found various definitions for communication. Communication has been defined as a concept that involves the exchange of information between the receiver and the source. Many definitions suggest that communication requires meanings that are based on a set of rules and are shared by the receiver and

source. For example, it is important that a nurse and a social worker who are trying to identify the quality of life of a terminally ill patient with kidney disease share an understanding on what quality of life means. In addition, the two need to adopt a general language system or a set of rules in their work. When putting together different definitions, communication can be defined once again as a process of sharing information to which a set of general rules have been applied.

However, because the word communication is abstract, we may all know intuitively what it signifies, but in fact the word may hold a different meaning for us all. Communication can be viewed as a social interaction involving the transmission/receipt of messages and sharing of conveyed meanings by members of society who use language as their tool, but in general, communication is known to be the process or act of exchanging information through the use of all types of symbols (Hwang, 2009).

As such, because communication bears various meanings, the multifarious concepts of communication should be introduced. The definitions shall include the wide-ranging human communication along with the narrower concepts of health communication, clinical communication and assertive communication.

## **Human Communication**

Human communication involves the interaction among individuals. It includes the use of symbols and words and thereby is different from other types of communication such as animal communication. Ability to use alternating expressive language is a unique characteristic of human communication.

Human communication is related to how an individual interacts with others through the use of symbolic actions or language. The process is one of natural exchange and emotion. In other words, human communication is progressive rather than static and includes not only information but also the emotions and attitudes of humans.

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