

What is leadership?

So what exactly is leadership?

Leadership is about creating two things; inspiring and results. It can be seen as the process of encouraging and helping others towards a clear objective. It can be the behaviour of a person/ individual who is directing activities of a group towards a shared goal. It can be a relationship in which one person can influence others to work together willingly on a related task to achieve the desired outcome or goal.

"Leadership is not reserved for a few charismatic men and women. It is a process that ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others. What we've discovered is that people make extraordinary things happen by liberating the leader within everyone" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

How do we define leadership in the context of nursing?

Nursing is a dynamic and challenging profession requiring engaging and inspiring role models and leaders. As a profession, nurses take a holistic, person-centred approach to care. Nurses assess and monitor changes in patient's health status, develop care plans, deliver clinical nursing interventions and evaluate patient outcomes. As a result, they play a critical role in identifying and responding to changes in a person's health.

Leadership is a fundamental part of effective nursing care and nurses are recognised as leaders in patient care. This can be seen through:

- Nursing involves the implementation of goal-driven interventions that aim to improve a patient's health status or comfort;
- Nurses coordinate and motivate care teams, families and patients to support patient well-being;
- Nurses need to be adaptable and have effective communication skills, including the ability to influence others towards a common goal;
- Nurses are often at the forefront of initiatives to improve safety and quality in healthcare systems.

So where should we see leadership in healthcare?

WellNSW Health recognises that leadership can be exercised anywhere in a hospital or health service organisation because nursing leaders are everywhere!

Nursing leaders are found from practising nurses & in-charges to those who hold government posts or executive positions within health care organisations. These leaders can make connections between challenges at the local level and the broader political, economic and social context. They understand the factors that have shaped the current health system and can look beyond day-to-day challenges to develop long-term strategies to drive improvements in patient and population health outcomes. These leaders also have a key contribution to make in shaping the design and delivery of new models of care, as well as driving the changes that will be required for their implementation.

Evidence demonstrates effective leadership has a direct correlation with:

- Positive patient outcomes
- Productivity
- Staff satisfaction

- Reduction in incidents
- Greater response to change and organisation challenges.

NSW Health Leadership and Management Framework.

The below HETI Health Leadership and Management Framework (HLMF) reinforces this notion that leadership must be demonstrated by all staff members across an organisation. To ensure effective leadership is maintained in health, the HLMF states that people not only requires the ability to lead and influence themselves (which helps in achieving the desired patient outcomes) but also the ability to lead and work with others (so that people aren't just reliant on a handful of individuals). All of this is essential to influence and transform the healthcare system. There are 5 domains that focus on leadership in healthcare.



What do the domains in the framework actually mean?

1. Acheiving Outcomes-

- Building a common vision for future health outcomes
- Using outcomes for patients and clients as well as service agreements to drive performance
- Focusing on what makes a difference to results
- Being accountable for performance and resources.

2. Developing and Leading Self-

- Demonstrating self-awareness
- Actively seeking personal growth
- Modelling desired behaviours and values
- Taking responsibility for own performance and contribution to the service agreement.

3. Engaging People and Building Relationships-

- Facilitating effective team processes
- Fostering the development of others

- Harnessing talent and diversity
- Creating workplace culture environments where people can contribute.

4. Partnering and Collaborating Across Boundaries-

- Employing a collaborative approach to transforming the organisation
- Mobilising people to undertake collaborative action for service transformation
- Creating cross-sectoral collaborations to deliver service agreements
- Encouraging fresh insights from diverse sources to foster innovation.

5. Transforming the System-

- Demonstrating critical and systems thinking
- Assessing and working through resistance and other impediments to change
- Being politically astute and building support for change.

6. Managing Now and the Future-

- Focusing on ensuring that what is done today works for tomorrow.
- Leadership is less about being in control and more about participating and influencing the formation of sense making and meaning.
- Creating a context that enables connectedness, interaction and building trust.

So what are the qualities of an effective nurse leader?

There is lots of research on this area as leadership is essential to nursing! Some of these qualities have probably been discussed with you in your degree and some will be further explored in this subject. Below is just some of the qualities mentioned in current literature...

Emotional Intelligence

Nurse leaders work closely with all staff and students, to help them develop emotional intelligence. Support helps peers to cope with the stressors that present during routine challenges. Nurse leaders assist in managing those challenges and other counterproductive influences that can result in emotional exhaustion and poor team collaboration.

Integrity

Integrity for one's self and among charges is a primary objective for nurse leaders. Personal integrity aids nurses in making the right choices during critical times with patients' treatment plans. Effective leaders adapt to use, and teach, ethically viable practices that enable fledgling nurse leaders to make safe and effective care decisions intrinsically.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is used to develop our ability to make decisions based on a complex array of factors. This skill is vital in a health care environment with increasing instances of multidisciplinary collaboration. The growing trend of autonomy for nurses also makes critical thinking a valuable professional skill for nurses

Dedication to Excellence

Nurse leaders are committed to their passion and purpose and exemplify this through their perseverance in the caregiving setting. Nurse leaders are dedicated to excellence by delivering high-quality care so that others can learn from their examples.

Communication Skills

The current multidisciplinary team environment greatly increases the importance of collaboration in the care provider setting. Effective communication is necessary to facilitate collaboration between members of the multidisciplinary such as; engaging with various medical professionals, allied health, primary care providers, and senior executives.

Respect

Nurse leaders are passionate and dynamic influencers who inspire change in others, which creates respect from others. To accomplish this, leaders teach communication techniques such as two-way communication and rephrasing to promote a workplace environment where stakeholders engage each other in a productive, positive manner. By understanding each other's circumstances, nursing staff gain respect for their peers and nurse leaders.

Mentorship

Nurse leaders deploy motivational strategies that cater to individual personalities. By empowering colleagues and guiding them toward understanding their roles as care providers, nurse leaders cultivate an environment of continual learning. Effective nurse leaders make every effort to identify learning opportunities.

Professionalism

Nursing is a dynamic profession that requires competent, confident leadership. The professional nurse represents the nursing field at nearly every professional point of contact within the organization such as; with patients, families, visitors and all staff. It is imperative the nurse remains professional and practices to the full extent of the nursing standards at all times.