OVERCOMING THE NURSING CRISIS

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The Crisis Details

American Hospital Association (2023):

- 62% of U.S. nurses experience burnout.

- It is even higher for nurses under the age of 25 (69%).

- According to the World Health Association, burnout is defined by:

  - Mental and physical exhaustion.

  - Mental distance from the job.

  - Cynicism about the job.

  - Reduced efficacy in the workplace.

The Crisis Details

Nurse Suicide; Journal of Psychosocial Nursing Mental Health Services (2021):

• The nursing profession has an 18% higher suicide rate than the general population.

• Among female nurses, the risk of death by suicide is nearly twice the risk observed

in the general population and 70 percent more likely than female physicians.

• Rates of death by suicide among physicians does not differ significantly from the

general population.

The Crisis Details

According to a post by the CDC reviewed in 2020 with content from The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health:

- 80% of nurses do not feel safe in their workplace.

- In a survey of 125 ED nurses, intensive care unit and general floor nurses at a regional medical center, 82% of ED nurses had been physically assaulted at work in one year.

- 25% of psychiatric nurses experienced disabling injuries from patient assaults.

The Crisis Details

Nurse Staffing Shortages; U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2024):

Hospital closings, due to nurse staffing shortages, occur monthly across the U.S. numbering in the double and triple digits. "In June 2023, there were 293 rural hospitals at risk of immediate closure. At the forefront of the risk chart are Kansas and Texas, with both states facing the immediate potential loss of 29 hospitals."

The Crisis Details

American Nursing Association (2023):

18% of newly licensed nurses leave the profession within the first year.

The Crisis Details

A logical perspective:

There is a nurse shortage to begin with, and then more than half of working nurses are performing substandardly because of burnout as defined by the World Health Organization.

Stated Causes

According to the American Nurses Association (2023):

- Nurses feel underappreciated by the facility they work for.

- Lack of positive leadership.

- Excessive hours.

- Lack of moral support.

- Burnout

- Patient-to-nurse ratios.

- Incivility in the workplace.

- Moral injury.

- Feel unsafe (CDC, 2020).

Stated Causes

Moral Injury (ANA, 2024);

"...a psychological wound that happens when a person feels they must take actions, or witness actions, that violate their deeply held moral beliefs. The term also describes the challenges of knowing what kind of care your patients need but being unable to provide that care due to factors beyond your control."

Coping

Many solutions are just coping mechanisms for nurses, rather than addressing the cause. In other words, symptoms are addressed, not the root causes. For example, Nurses are told to "rest, eat well, take breaks, and get exercise." Even if these things work for some nurses, the core problem remains for nurses, patients, and LTC residents. Coping is a band aide, not a solution.

Furthermore, for the most part, nurses are blamed for the crisis for not partaking in "self-care."

Solution

Relationship-Centered Communication

The solution is the practice and application of nursing models taught by many nursing schools; specifically, relationship-centered communication, which is an alternative to hierarchical nursing administration. Many believe that hierarchical care models are directly responsible for the present-day nursing crisis. Hierarchy also has a tendency to ignore individual needs. RCC does not dismiss hierarchy altogether, but emphases "well managed hierarchy" (Chou & Cooley, 2018).

Solution

Relationship-Centered Communication

If you examine the stated causes for the nurse crisis on the previous slide, the issues are all relational. Hence, it makes sense that a new model of communication between care team members would be affective as a solution. It should be noted that preventative solutions to the present-day nursing crisis are widely taught in nursing schools, but the principles do not transcend into nursing practice.

Solution

Elements of Relationship-Centered Communication (Chou & Cooley, 2018)

	Poorly Managed Hierarchy	Well-Managed Hierarchy
Roles	Different roles are clearly ranked, with some more important than others.	Roles are clearly distinguished without unnecessary ranking.
Respect	Some team members feel disrespected and that they are perceived to be unimportant.	All team members are actively recognized as important members of the team and are treated with respect.
Voice	Team members feel that their voices are not welcome or heard.	Team members experience that their voices are expected and responded to.
Power and Control	Team members' predominant experience is being told what to do and how to do it. They are handed decisions from above that are not informed by their experience and local environment.	All team members are given some freedom in determining how to accomplish work goals. They understand the decision-making process, and decisions take their experience and local environment into account.

Solution

Elements of Relationship-Centered Communication (Chou & Cooley, 2018)

- Be thoughtful about how and when team members are addressed.

- Implement processes that support participation and decision-making by all team members.

- Create a just culture.

- Delegate so that team members have some control over their local environment.

- Apply principles of reciprocity and mutuality to team interactions, including feedback.

- Hold team members across the hierarchy to the same standards.

- Foster transparency by acknowledging hierarchy and its effects.

- Implement Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as an employment strategy.

Obstacles

- While some facilities will have elements of a well managed hierarchy, few facilities will pursue relationship-centered communication with intentionality.

- Authority is easier than leadership.

  - Authority excludes the necessity for leadership.

    - This is why leadership is lacking.

- Top-down hierarchies are easier to manage than cooperative bodies.

- Some people seek self-actualization through their authority.

Application Solutions

- Pursue positions where you can promote solutions (education or management).

- Pursue autonomy for purposes of practicing according to your own conscience. Agency work may be one way to do that.

- Practice relationship-centered care as much as you can in any given situation (lead by example).

- <u>Always choose employment that facilitates your own self-actualization.</u>

Application Solutions

Always choose employment that facilitates your own self-actualization according to

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

- Does this job supply my basic needs?

- Does this job supply security?

- Can I trust my coworkers?

- Management and coworkers respect others.

- Does this job contribute to self-esteem and self-fulfillment?

- Does the job facilitate upward mobility?

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