



Short Article

Nurses' Approach during 'Unprecedented Times'

Merlin Mary James

Surgical Nurse, East Surrey Hospital, Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, Redhill, Surrey, United Kingdom.

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I N F O

E-mail Id:

merlinjames1988@yahoo.com

Orcid Id:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9496-983X>

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A B S T R A C T

Life may throw surprises which may delve us into the depths of sorrow during uncertainties. Uncertainty is a fact of life and cannot be avoided. Nurses are an integral part of the healthcare delivery system and share responsibilities in collaboration with other allied health professions for the attainment of optimal health for all members of the society. They don several hats and perform multiple tasks whilst at work which maps across being at the bedside with the patient to be a voice to lead at the boardroom. It is very heartening to see that on the coronavirus frontline these unsung and quiet heroes are being recognized and noticed at last. This paper highlights four-fold strategic approaches that enabled nurses and will enable them in the future to deal with uncertainty.

Keywords: Uncertainty, Unprecedented Times, Frontline Warriors, Nurses' Approach

Introduction

It is said, "when life throws you lemons, make lemonade". Easier said than done. Life throws many such surprises which often startles us, sometimes troubles us and in some rare cases may lead us to despair when we are ill-prepared and without hope to face it. Uncertainty is a fact of life and cannot be avoided, but we can be prepared to face it with gusto. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has brought into fore the role of nurses and their unquestionable commitment to providing quality healthcare. Nurses comprise the major workforce of the healthcare system globally and their role in providing quality healthcare is indispensable and they are rightly called the "cornerstone of healthcare". They are an integral part of the healthcare delivery system and share responsibilities in collaboration with other allied healthcare professionals for providing quality healthcare to all members of the society.

They don several hats and perform multiple tasks whilst at work across the spectrum from listening at bedside to a patient to be a leading voice at the boardroom.

Nursing is a profession within the healthcare system that focuses on rendering care to individuals, families and

communities, so that they may attain and/or maintain optimal health and quality of life. According to Florence Nightingale, "Nursing is to bring the healthy and those who are suffering from disease to a condition for nature to act for preserving health, preventing disease and injury and to restore health and cure disease."

Ironically, the nursing profession did not get acceptance from the public as they should have in the past. However, it is very heartening to see that on the coronavirus frontline these unsung heroes are finally getting their due. Coincidentally in 2019, WHO declared 2020 as the 'Year of Nurses and Midwives', and in 2020, the world saw an unprecedented international health crisis where the role of nurses was discussed and appreciated than ever before. 2020 has been an overwhelming year for the healthcare community across the globe, demanding their best efforts to be put in to ensure prompt and quality care is delivered. One term that has captured the attention of media across the globe that will always be remembered, at least in the foreseeable future is 'frontline warriors' and this would not be an exaggeration to say that nurses stand as first among equals of these frontline warriors.



Four - Fold Approaches

Throughout history, nurses worked tirelessly in crisis situations by providing selfless care to the needy and mitigated their suffering, so this catastrophe of Covid – 19 is no different. It is my humble attempt to highlight some approaches that enabled nurses in the past and will enable the current and future nurses to equip themselves in times such as these.

Dismantle the dragon - Addressing personal conflicts:

It is certain that uncertainties and precarious situations like this leave us baffled as to whether to continue or to quit working. There are possibilities, that times like these bogs us down because of the hardships we face, lack of adequate personal protective equipment, long working hours, lack of support, and motivation. It can be a conflicting situation wherein we have the heart to help the needy but the circumstances don't favor it. It is therefore crucial to dismantle the dragon which is our personal conflicts. However, we need to understand that it is during the crisis situation, that our skills are tested fully and our contribution matters the most. It is vital to deal positively with our internal conflicts and brace ourselves to deal with the daunting challenges that such times throws at us. It is true that it will be overwhelming, however, it is also sure that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Dealing with personal conflicts in the right manner will enable us to be more prepared to work effectively in any crisis situations. It is pivotal that we intervene and talk to individuals whom we rely on and seek their help. Focussing on the things we can control is a key step in addressing personal conflicts. Sleep, exercise, good nutrition, and meditation are essential and proven stress busters and productivity enhancers. To address a conflict, we need to stay focused and seek help from our trusted colleagues, seniors and family members.

Storm the Stage - Accepting the change: The only constant thing in life is change. It is quite hard to accept the change, however, one can't be sure that the present situation will not last long, so we need to be aware and alert to the change. Denying and walking past the change, will not help us to grow in our profession, rather it will retard and obliterate our growth process. Anticipating and accepting the change, will help us to overcome the fear and the positive change will define who we are eventually and enable us to storm the stage of uncertainty and changing circumstances. Change is scary but it's unwise to be fearful of the unknown. In order to accept the change and be not afraid of it, we have to be comfortable with the unknown by seeing the wonder and opportunity in change and have to acknowledge and embrace it. To accept change, we have to realize that it's outcome is not always bad and putting a positive spin on things can ease out the fear. A bespoke strategy of realizing that change can bring good,

thereby opening avenues for improvement for self and our profession and, also that the change can result in negative outcomes, which will force us to understand the quantum of the risk and improvising and implementing strategies to mitigate the risk.

Take the bull by the horns - Adhering to new norms: Non-adherence to the new norms/rules poses threat to self and others. Covid - 19 has brought about a whole gamut of new norms along with it, like social distancing, quarantine measures, proper handwashing and sanitization, work from home, usage of Personal Protective Equipment, virtual meetings, to list a few. Adherence to these new norms entails diligence, discipline, and patience. Complying with the new rules will not only help to mitigate the risk by being prepared but also enable us to limit the spread of this deadly virus, placing less stress on the healthcare system, and fewer deaths, thereby yielding tangible results. It is true that we have the tendency to go back to the previous norms, but we need to adapt to the current situation and persuade others to abide by the rules. Taking the bull by the horn will help us to perform better during uncertain times.

Shift to the top gear - Accelerating work skills: In order to emerge stronger during a crisis situation, we need to shift to the top gear by accelerating the rate of upskilling and reskilling. It is important that nurses should be sensitive towards the change and adapt rapidly to the changing situations to match their new roles and activities. To meet this challenge, the healthcare administration should curate strategies that develop the critical, cognitive, digital, social, and emotional skills of the nursing workforce, to improve their adaptability and resilience. Upskilling and reskilling will help to improve the capacity for addressing the possible second wave.

Apparently, it has not been an easy ride for nurses to work in the middle of uncertainty and putting their and family's lives in jeopardy. Covid 19, is demanding a fast-paced and united response across the healthcare workforce. At such a time like this, there is an exceptional demand for our services, and it is crucial that we exercise our skills safely and effectively. It's indeed incredible to see how nurses have pulled together, embraced the change, demonstrated their skills, volunteered to rapidly upskill as a part of preparedness, and response to the coronavirus threat. It is important to brace ourselves, come together, and deliver the best care in such a stressful time. We need to get through the hardships and not drift away from the focus and calling. If we drift away, we would miss out on our intimacy with the nursing profession, amidst the chaos and pain. It's important to hold on to the rope of hope tightly and not quit during unprecedented times. This act of selfless service of nurses in this unprecedented time will never go unnoticed and will reverberate for times to come.