

# Nursing practice

## Part 1

### Chapters

- 1 What is nursing? 2
- 2 The 6 Cs 4
- 3 Accountability and responsibility 6
- 4 Risk and safety 8
- 5 Patient-centred care 10
- 6 Team working 12

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

## 1

# What is Nursing?

Figure 1.1 Three definitions of nursing

### International Council of Nursing

Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles

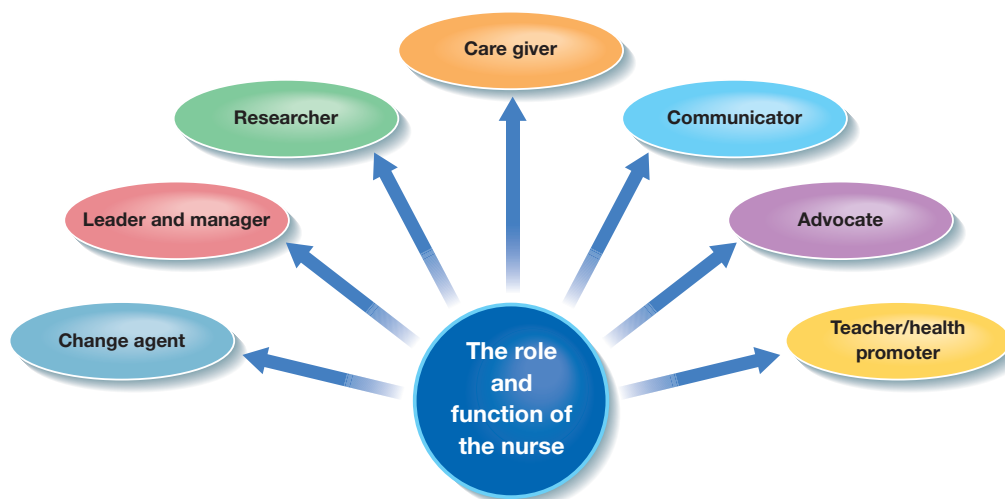
### The American Nurses Association

Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations

### Royal College of Nursing

The use of clinical judgment in the provision of care to enable people to improve, maintain, or recover health, to cope with health problems, and to achieve the best possible quality of life, whatever their disease or disability, until death

Figure 1.2 Some elements associated with the role of the nurse



To care safely and effectively for a person, the nurse must understand what nursing is, the role of the nurse and the function of the nurse. Attempting to do this, however, brings with it challenges.

## Defining nursing

The International Council of Nursing suggests that nursing encompasses the autonomous and collaborative care of people of all ages, families, groups and communities, be these sick or well and in all settings. Nurses in undertaking their work promote health, prevent illness and care for those who are ill or disabled and people who are dying. Central to the nurse's role is advocacy, the promotion of a safe environment, research, participating in shaping health policy in patient and health systems management and education.

The American Nurses Association explains that nursing is concerned with the protection, promotion and optimisation of health and ability, preventing illness and injury, and relief from suffering. Nurses do this through diagnosis and treatment of the human response; nurses also act as advocates caring for individuals, families, communities and populations.

The Royal College of Nursing (2003: [www.rcn.org.uk/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/604038/Defining\\_Nursing\\_Web.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/___data/assets/pdf_file/0003/604038/Defining_Nursing_Web.pdf)) professes that nursing can be described as the provision of care that is underpinned by clinical judgement, enabling individuals to improve or maintain health or recover from illness. Nurses assist people to cope with health problems; they contribute to enhancing the quality of life regardless of the person's disease or disability until their death.

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of three definitions of nursing.

The fact that there are so many definitions of nursing (not to mention what it is that nurses do) would suggest that the term is elusive and is difficult if not impossible to define. When working in a variety of contexts, for example, a hospital ward, person's own home or general practice, the role and function of the nurse will change in response to the context in which care is being offered. However, there are still central components of the nurse's role that will never change, for example, offering support, providing information and making decisions that are in the best interests of the person. What must be remembered, however, is that different kinds of definitions are needed for different purposes.

Nursing is a dynamic activity and as such it is constantly developing to meet the needs of people. Nursing and what nurses do take account of new knowledge from a variety of disciplines, for example, the social (psychology, social anthropology, sociology) and physical (chemistry, biology, physics) sciences. No one definition of nursing will ever suffice due to the complex nature of the human being. Trying to define nursing could be too limiting but without a definition, it would be difficult to formulate policy, specify services and develop educational curricula and therefore some specification is required.

## The function of the nurse

Just as it is a challenge to attempt to define nursing, it is also a challenge to describe the role and function of the nurse. Figure 1.2 provides some elements that are associated with the role of the nurse.

### Care giver

This aspect of the role has traditionally included those activities that assist the person from a physical and psychological

perspective while preserving the person's dignity, providing comfort and respecting the person. The notion of care giving embodies physical, psychosocial, developmental, cultural and spiritual aspects; this is often referred to as a holistic approach.

### Communicator

The most important aspect of the role of the nurse concerns communication which is central to all nursing roles. The nurse communicates with the person, the person's family (as well as those who support the person), a variety of health professionals and others in the community. Communication takes many forms, non-verbal (i.e. body language, the ability to actively listen, and written communication) and verbal. The quality of a nurse's communication (efficacy) is an important element in nursing care.

### Advocate

The role of an advocate is to protect the person; when required, the nurse represents the needs of the person, assisting the person in exercising their rights and helping them speak up for themselves.

### Teacher/health promoter

The nurse as teacher/health promoter helps people to learn about their health and what they need to do to restore or maintain their health. Assessing the person's learning needs and readiness to learn, the nurse working with the person sets learning goals, performing teaching strategies and measuring learning.

### Change agent

The nurse acts as a change agent when assisting others, helping them to make modifications in their own behaviour. Nurses also work with others to make changes in the healthcare system.

### Leader and manager

The nurse as leader influences others to work together to accomplish specific goals. This is often carried out at different levels: individual person, family, groups of people, colleagues or the community. The nurse manages the nursing care of individuals, families and communities, appropriately delegating activities to others, supervising and evaluating their performance.

### Researcher

Nurses use and conduct research to enhance care. As researchers and consumers of research, they must be aware of the process and language of research.

## The changing role of the nurse

As the role of the nurse continues to expand, there are a number of new aspects developing alongside the function of the nurse.

Consultant nurses and clinical nurse specialists have usually completed a doctorate or Master's degree in a specialty and have a considerable range of clinical expertise in that specialty. These nurses provide expert care to individuals, participate in educating healthcare professionals and undertake research.

The nurse practitioner is skilled at making nursing assessments, performing examinations, counselling, teaching and treating minor and self-limiting illness.

A nurse educator teaches in clinical and educational settings, teaches theoretical knowledge and clinical skills and conducts research.