

The strengthening nursing in different contexts of action based on leadership: beyond practice, into policy

Fortalecimento da enfermagem nos diferentes contextos de atuação a partir da liderança: para além da prática, na política

Fortalecimiento de la enfermería en los diferentes contextos de actuación a partir del liderazgo: más allá de la práctica, en la política

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Leadership in nursing is a necessary competence not only for professional practice but is also a strategy to strengthen the profession and lead it to better paths and the conquest of new spaces and status through practical, educational and political action. A nurse leader is one who is able to direct and influence people, teams and large groups based on her or his technical and scientific competence, values and ethical principles that serve as an example for others, attracting them, inspiring them and influencing good behavior and results, as well as expanding spaces and achieving new achievements.

Among the characteristics of a leader, we can emphasize the ability to relate and communicate with people, to aggregate groups, to manage conflicts, to respect diversities, to be visionary and to continually carry out self-assessment so as to be able to make assertive decisions and assume new responsibilities. Leadership is an indispensable skill that affects the quality of the organizational culture of institutions and work relationships, people and service management.¹ Therefore, we need to turn

our attention to training new nurse-leaders since graduation and offering possibilities and resources for future nurses to become politicized, creative, critical, reflective professionals who are capable of decision-making, problem solving and enhancing the quality of care provided to users of health services.

The development of leadership must be strengthened with experiences in clinical practice and in daily work, in permanent education aimed at best practices, in permanent education of professionals, in postgraduate studies, in the management of organizational and clinical risks and in the contextualized use of evidence and clinical protocols to making decisions.

Movements for the training of leading nurses developed in postgraduate courses must be directed to the development of research that results in strong scientific evidence. These results can be translated into practice, and/or teaching and/or research, and must result in innovations and/or technologies, as well as advances in Nursing Science. In this context, even in the face of the significant improvement in nursing care and the results of research and the clinical experience developed in recent decades, the pandemic revealed gaps in the training of nurses, sought-after working conditions and the need for greater insertion of nurses in strategic positions in the services, at the boards of directors and in the group that formulates public policies. To clarify this statement, we refer to the Covid-19 pandemic, when health and nursing professionals were applauded for the exceptional work carried out in assisting the population infected with the SARS-Cov-2 virus. However, unfortunately, in Brazil, Nursing does not have the deserved recognition from society, service managers and politicians, as several health institutions offer their workers inappropriate working conditions and do not offer dignified guarantees to Nursing workers, who continue to wait for the decision on how and when the raise of the minimum wage, approved after a decade of struggle, will be paid.

Also, adjustments in the curricula of undergraduate courses are necessary, especially the increase in the workload allocated to clinical practices in order to improve the competence of nurses and consequently allow them greater security and possibilities to occupy leadership positions. In postgraduate studies, it is necessary to review the research lines of the programs and the curriculum of disciplines in order to provide nurses with the opportunity to develop clinical and professional leadership and

fundamental skills for the implementation of Advanced Practice Nursing (APN), capable of meeting the health needs of the population and solving identified problems (evidence-based practices; clinical reasoning; autonomy practice; education and teaching; collaboration and interprofessional relations; ethical and legal practices; quality and safety management; health; health promotion; communication; cultural competence; change management).²

In relation to APN, it is recommended the training at the master's level and that it allows educational preparation at an advanced level for the purpose of formal recognition and that the nurse has a functional role that integrates research, education, practice and management. It is also recommended a high degree of professional autonomy, advanced assessment and diagnostic and decision-making capabilities. The course must have certification or accreditation and its own legislation.³

In Brazil, although several efforts have been carried out in order to establish APN, there is still a long way to go, due to differences in the educational levels of nurses, economic factors, restrictive practices advocated by physicians, as well as the need for public policies that ensure legal support for nursing practice from the perspective of advanced practice.⁴ Thus, it is necessary to further strengthen the performance of current political and academic leaders and nurses for the technical, scientific, cultural and political development of nursing professionals with the purpose of defending policies and programs aimed at improving the quality of life of the population, the APN and better working conditions.

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