TRANSFORMING NURSE/PATIENT COMMUNICATION BY CREATING A CARITAS PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT
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Introduction: Winter Haven Hospital adopted Jean Watson as their Nurse Theorist and has used her Caring Theory as the foundation for our Professional Model of Care. The fundamentals of nursing practice are providing compassionate care and developing human relationships, rather than focusing on curative tasks. Dr. Watson writes that caring relationships “are critical to outcomes for patients and nurses alike” allowing for healing to occur (Watson, 2008, p.75). Patients value nonclinical aspects as part of their overall hospital experience, including communication, emotional connection and trust. By establishing Caritas practice in the Emergency Department (ED), I believe nurse/patient communication can be enhanced. Human connection and engagement to improve communication can lead to improved quality patient care and increased patient satisfaction. This project is intended to transform ED nurse/patient communication by creating a Caritas practice environment that incorporates human connection and engagement to drive increased communication and a more positive patient experience.

Significance: The current practice environment in the ED is fast-paced, focused on tasks and driven by technology. The quality of care and satisfaction with the patient care experience are greatly influenced by the importance of communication and compassion given by the ED staff.

This project focuses on Caritas Processes™ Four and Eight, developing and sustaining a helping trusting authentic caring relationship and creating a healing environment at all levels (Watson, 2008, p.31). Staff education on the use of Caritas Processes™ with a focus on the impact of small changes made to the staff caring practice will enhance nurse/patient communication and lead to increased patient satisfaction. In return enhancing the staff’s communication skills will awaken and reconnect staff with their own humanity and intrinsic values that drive caring.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to transform nurse/patient communication using Caritas practices creating a Caritas Practice Environment, resulting in increased quality of care and patient satisfaction.

Setting and Participants: The project took place at Winter Haven Hospital and included direct care staff in the ED. A group of 8 Registered Nurses were selected to assist in initiating this project by utilizing and practicing the Caritas Processes™ when interacting with patients/family. The ED consists of a 33-bed main ED with the use of 18 additional beds to meet high volume demands.

Project Description/Process: Information was presented in 4 modules over 4 weeks on the Theory of Human Caring, Caritas Processes™ Four and Eight, and communication
techniques to enhance their intentionality and authenticity when providing patient care. Each week participants were asked to initiate what they learn and use Caritas practice with at least 2 patients per shift. They recorded notes/stories on patient encounters and the patients’ reaction to Caritas practice. Participants also recorded their own feelings on providing a more caring experience for the patient.

The four modules are
2. Patient scenarios and utilizing Caritas Practice - patient care scenarios were presented and staff was asked to evaluate how Caritas practice could be utilized in each scenario.
3. Patient communication tools, the patient’s non-clinical aspect of care, and an overview of what patients describe, as “great care” were introduced. These include emotional connection, trust, communication and physical comfort and were taught using Caritas Processes™ Four and Eight.
4. Evaluation - A closing Caritas ceremony was held using stones. Participants shared a patient interaction/caring story from the last 3 weeks and placed the stone on a table to build a memorial. A small stone was given as a takeaway to each participant.

Projected Outcomes: Staff experienced and recognized the Caritas Processes™ in action and gained a clearer understanding of how intentionality and a deep authentic presence can lead to enhanced nurse/patient communication resulting in a trusting caring healing relationship.

Project Evaluation: As the Caritas team begins to apply this basic knowledge they will utilize these modules to incorporate Caritas practice into their daily care rituals to transform nurse/patient communication.

Future Directions: The author expects to expand the rollout of these modules to the entire ED team and hospital facility. It is intended that all staff will incorporate Caritas practice into their daily care rituals to transform nurse/patient communication.

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References:
- Winter Haven Hospital Nursing Professional Model of Care.