

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for the program of learning in nursing reflects the faculty's beliefs about the practice and discipline of nursing. Exploring concepts integral to nursing, the framework offers perspective concerning the relationships of human beings, human response, health, nursing and caring.

Human beings are individuals affected by internal and/or external stressors, which produce responses that affect the individual's health status. These human responses are unique to the individual and are based on physiological, pathophysiological, experiential and behavioral perspectives. The physiological perspective includes the usual biological or normal regulatory response to a stressor. When individuals respond in predominantly physiological responses or compensation, they are in a state of health. The pathophysiological perspective includes the disordered biologic function in the direction of decompensation or illness that results from a stressor. The experiential perspective is based on the diverse characteristics of the individual and the shared meaning based on the context of the situation. It represents the unique response of the individual to each event. The response is influenced by Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, Erikson's stages of development, culture, spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, lifestyle, socioeconomic status, values and health beliefs. The behavioral perspective includes directly observable motor or verbal reactions. The nurse is required to determine the links among the responses of the individual and the family in the four perspectives in order to determine strengths upon which to build and to recognize barriers to consider before providing care.

Human responses are organized into nine patterns (exchanging, communicating, relating, valuing, choosing, moving, perceiving, knowing, and feeling), which reflect the entire individual and family. Health is the dynamic state of balance among human responses and internal and external stressors. Imbalances or health problems occur when: 1) external stressors exceed internal ability to compensate, 2) internal stressors exceed external ability to support, or 3) changes occur in both internal and external stressors, resulting in decompensation. Human responses identify where nursing can be effective and where nursing care should begin.

Nursing is the "diagnosis and treatment of human response" (ANA, 2003) to actual and potential health problems. Nursing practice is based on the use of best available evidence, standards of care, informatic tools, and quality improvement data to achieve patient outcomes. Human responses establish the direction of nursing actions and the priorities of care, while the goal of nursing remains health promotion and disease prevention through primary, secondary and tertiary levels of preventive care. Balanced responses or strengths of the individual are stabilizing factors and can be reinforced by the nurse to maintain or

promote health. Health problems present as imbalanced responses and require nursing intervention to promote or regain health. Nursing care is patient-centered and encompasses the preferences, values and needs of the individual or family.

The nurse applies critical thinking in the health care setting to make clinical judgments which promote health, prevent disease, and achieve optimal balance in the individual's responses. Within critical thinking is the nursing process, which includes the phases of assessment, analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The nurse collaborates with the interdisciplinary team to apply diagnostic reasoning to systematically explore, reflect, and determine the plan of action that results in safe, quality care.

The nurse promotes balance in human responses by acting in the roles of the Associate Degree Nurse as delineated by the National League for Nursing, which are provider of care, including teacher and communicator; manager of care, and member of the profession. The roles are implemented across the health care continuum through the entire episode of a health problem until the problem no longer requires nursing care, has been resolved, or death occurs. The health care continuum allows nursing care to be delivered in a variety of settings, which include the home, acute care, ongoing facility care, and community care. The individual may enter the health care continuum at any point and move within as necessary.

Inherent in nursing is the concept of caring. Caring is grounded in the universal human values of compassion, empathy, and concern for self and others. The caring process is practiced interpersonally and includes the ability to be knowledgeable and competent when providing care. The nurse must provide a caring environment that offers the development of potential, minimizes the risk of harm, and allows the person to choose the best action for self. Thus, through caring, the nurse assists the individual to attain or maintain a balance in human responses.

