
UNIT 4 TEAM FUNCTIONING IN HEALTH CARE SETTING

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the meaning and concept of a team;
- explain the importance and need of team functioning;
- discuss the factors affecting team functioning;
- enlist the members of health team; and
- describe the role of nurse as a health team members.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this sub-section you will come to know about team functioning and its concept. As a Nurse Administrator you are responsible to make a team. After studying the sub-section you will learn about the team functioning in Health Care setting.

'United we stand, divided we fall.' Nobody can successfully run any organisation all alone. All successful organizations develop a team for efficient working. Teams are working groups. A group must have some stability of membership to be called as team. Members of the team work interdependently and they function as interrelated parts of the whole team. If people work independent of one another and have little communication, coordination or shared responsibilities they cannot be considered as working in a team.

4.2 TEAM FUNCTIONING

4.2.1 Meaning and Concept

When more than one person, having a common goal and a common leader, interact with each other, it is called a team. Teamwork is essential for successful achievements.

Team is defined as a group of people with different knowledge, skills and attitudes working together for its stated purposes with defined goals and the members are mutually accountable. The literal meaning of team can be described as:

T– Togetherness

E– Enhances the team spirit

A– Application of group dynamics and human relations

Building Up of a Team

Effective team does not just happen. Team is formed based on tasks. Team building requires specific knowledge, skill and work. Steps of team building: .

- 1) Select team members: Ability to contribute to the work of the team (task) and to work as a member of a team (relationship), is an important consideration for selection of team members.
- 2) Set Goals: The purposes and objectives or goals of the team should be clearly stated.
- 3) Define Roles: The role of individual team members should be clearly defined. Ambiguity in the individual's roles can cause conflicts among team members. These conflicts can immobilize the team and even contribute to its demise.
- 4) Develop team identity and cohesiveness: The team members should know about their team and its functions. The more the team members know about their team and its functions the more they can identify and affiliate themselves with the team.
 - i) The team needs an ideal place to meet especially, one that is **sufficiently** quite comfortable and private so that team matters can be discussed freely. The team also needs to acquire functional and psychological spheres in the organization or community within which it functions. Other health care providers must also recognise and accept the function and purpose of the team.
 - ii) The team members should meet at regular intervals or whenever required. The members should share their experiences with each other.
 - iii) The team leader should ask other team members to offer help when someone in the team needs help in solving a problem.
 - iv) When a job is done well by the team, the leader must appreciate the members to enhance their morale and increase team cohesiveness.
- 5) Guide Decision Making: The leader should select appropriate method for decision making, which may include majority vote, unanimous consent, etc. At times decision by authority may be necessary.
- 6) Influence Group Norms: Norms are unwritten rules that prescribe acceptable behaviour in the group. The group leader should be alert to the development of norms within the team, she should reinforce those norms that support effective working relationships and challenge those that reduce effectiveness preferably before they become well established.
- 7) Encourage open communication within the team: Open communication leads to a kind of understanding that promotes positive relationship. It is the means by which purposes and objectives are clarified, roles defined and negotiated, conflicts dealt with and decisions made. The team needs to know what type of work is being done by other teams, to prevent duplication of effort.
- 8) Manage conflicts: As a general rule conflicts are neither to be avoided nor stimulated but managed. Conflicts can stimulate creativity and provide opportunity to improve interpersonal and leadership skills and to develop deeper understanding of people.

4.2.2 Characteristics of an Effective Team

Following are the characteristics of an effective team:

- 1) Clarity of purpose: The purpose of the team should be clear.
- 2) Harmony: The team members should have harmonious relationship with each other.
- 3) Optimum Use of Resources: For proper functioning of the team, resources of man, money and material should be utilized effectively.
- 4) Process Oriented: Team members should be work oriented and must possess positive attitude towards the work.
- 5) Listening and Discussion: The members must listen to each other. There should be open discussion among the team members to arrive at unanimous decision so that every member is actively involved in the work.
- 6) Cohesiveness: Have trust and empathy, accommodate each other and be sincere towards the group and the job.
- 7) Negotiation and Initiative: The team **members** must take initiative to reach at

- 8) **Constructive Criticism:** Constructive criticism helps to improve the team functioning.
- 9) **Informal and Relaxed Atmosphere:** It helps to promote and improve the work **efficiency** of the **team** members.

4.2.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Team Functioning

Advantages

- 1) The team functioning helps to provide comprehensive health care services.
- 2) It helps the team members to contribute their own expertise or skills in caring for patients or family.
- 3) It promotes higher job satisfaction among the team members.
- 4) Coordination between the team members reduces duplication and omission of work. It also reduces conflicting **advices** by different team members **e.g.** if there is no coordination while taking care of a client, one member **may** advise the client to take more rest and the other may advise more exercise.
- 5) **The** team functioning stimulates each team member to work and reinforce the other. This helps to improve the quality of work.
- 6) The **team** members are able to help one another and to substitute for each other in an emergency. Hence, the team is more flexible and responsive than the individual worker can be.
- 7) Team functioning **provides** emotional support to its members. Effective teams can help **manage** anxieties and tensions within.
- 8) When team **members** have been involved in setting the team's objectives and in deciding how they will be met, they are usually most committed to the achievement of these objectives.
- 9) In a team, the team members work closely together and share their experiences. Team **members** have better scope to expand their knowledge and skills.

Disadvantages

- 1) Effective teamwork requires a considerable amount of interpersonal relationship and **skills** from team members as well as from the leader. Without this skill teamwork can be a frustrating, discouraging and energy consuming experience.
- 2) If team goals are not well defined or when roles and responsibilities of individual members are not clearly differentiated it may cause conflicts.
- 3) Team functioning becomes time consuming if it takes more time to bring team **members** together to ask for their inputs or decisions.
- 4) It reduces autonomy of the members: Some team members may find it difficult to compromise or to get along with the team's decision when it is not in agreement with their own.
- 5) **Authoritarian** team leader may prohibit disagreement and pressurize its members to adhere to group norms. Thus giving rise to jealousy on complexes.
- 6) It becomes difficult to hide mistakes and inadequacy while working in a team.
- 7) When responsibility for patient care outcome is shared by all the team members, each **member** should be able to trust the skill and judgement of other team members.

4.3 CLASSIFICATION OF A TEAM AND ITS STYLES OF FUNCTIONING

Teams can be classified according to their composition, purpose, leadership and functions. **Teams** can be described according to any or all of these categories:

- i) **Composition:** The skill and experience of people who make up the **team** are important characteristics of any team. Nursing team may consist of Assistant Nursing Superintendent, Nursing sisters, Staff nurses and Nursing Students. Interdisciplinary **teams are important in health care system e.g. Operation Theatre team may consist of**

- ii) Purpose: The purpose of the team or the kind of work it does is often indicated by its name. There is ICU team, Surgical team, Psychiatric team, Community Health team etc.
- iii) Leadership: The leadership of most teams can be divided into three categories according to the way in which a person become the leader of the team. They are designated, emergent or situational leader.

The designated Leader is one who has been deliberately chosen by the team, an administrator or by someone else with some authority over the team e.g. Assistant Nursing Superintendent may be a team leader of a nursing team in a hospital setting.

The emergent leader is one who evolves from the group by acting as a leader consistently enough to become the actual leader of the team. These leaders arise when the designated leaders are weak and ineffective or when the team has no designated leader.

The situational leader emerges from the group in response to a particular situation or need. The situational leader's role is limited to the situation in which that person has the best skills or experience to guide the team.

Teams can also be described in terms of their predominance with styles of leadership, which are described in Course 3, Block 2.

- iv) Styles of Team Functioning: Team can also be categorized according to the way in which they function. They can be classified according to the stage of development (forming, storming, norming, performing).

Forming: The stage of development when the team leaders form a team to accomplish a goal.

Storming: The stage when each member of the team is stimulated to discuss problems and give suggestions.

Norming: The stage of setting the standards to be achieved.

Performing: The stage when actions are taken for achievement of goals.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Define the following terms:

a) Emergent leader

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b) Situational leader

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2) Name the stages of development of a team:

a)

b)

c)

d)

4.4 HEALTH TEAM

To provide comprehensive health care to the client or community, a group of health professionals work together. The health care team comprises of four types of health professionals i.e. nurses, physicians, allied health professionals like technicians etc. and

4.4.1 Health Team Members

The following figure cites an example to you regarding a health team.

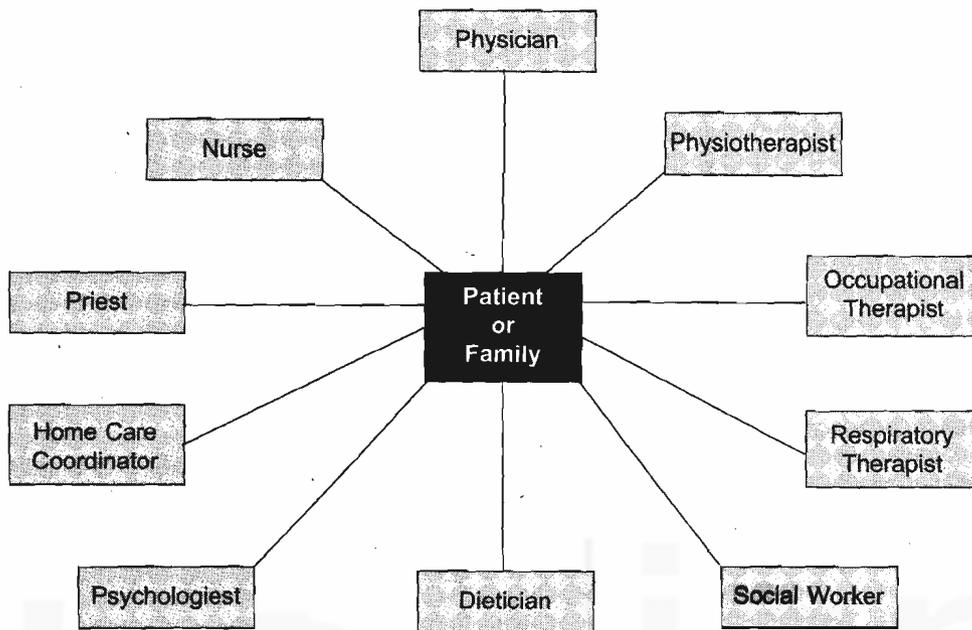


Fig. 4.1

The involvement of many different persons in health care however holds the risk of fragmenting care. Nurse, who spends the greatest amount of time with the patient or family often, has a role of co-ordinating and integrating various services within the plan of care. Each member of the health team is essential to the total, or holistic care of the patient or family.

There are various teams working in a hospital, to provide efficient, compassionate and competent care. These teams are:

- a) **Therapeutic or patient care team** consists of doctor, nurse, pharmacist, medicosocial worker, dietician and others depending upon the nature of the hospital and care provided.
- b) **Diagnostic team or investigative team** consists of members from the departments like laboratory, radiology, pathology and biochemistry.
- c) **Supportive team** consists of maintenance, housekeeping, transport aides and helpers.

On the other hand in the community there exists team like the **Community/Family Health Team**. This team consists of the family, the community health nurse, and health care professionals like physician, nutritionists, social worker, female health worker, Anganwadi workers, and voluntary health workers.

The composition of health team varies but the process remains the same as an organized effort for the purpose of providing integrated services to the community and the family. Essential participants in the community health team conference should be the members from the community, or the family. The community health nurse needs to be knowledgeable about public health nursing services to be rendered and the nature of other professionals in the team with whom she has to perform her duties.

In her primary role, the professional nurse must be allowed to operate independently, yet cooperatively with all the members of the health team. As a specialist in nursing, she assesses the patient's needs, looks for nursing problems, and determines what nursing care is needed and how it has to be given.

Fig. 4.2 illustrates the relationship of the nursing team to the professional health team. The nurse functions as liaison between the two teams, the patient and his family.

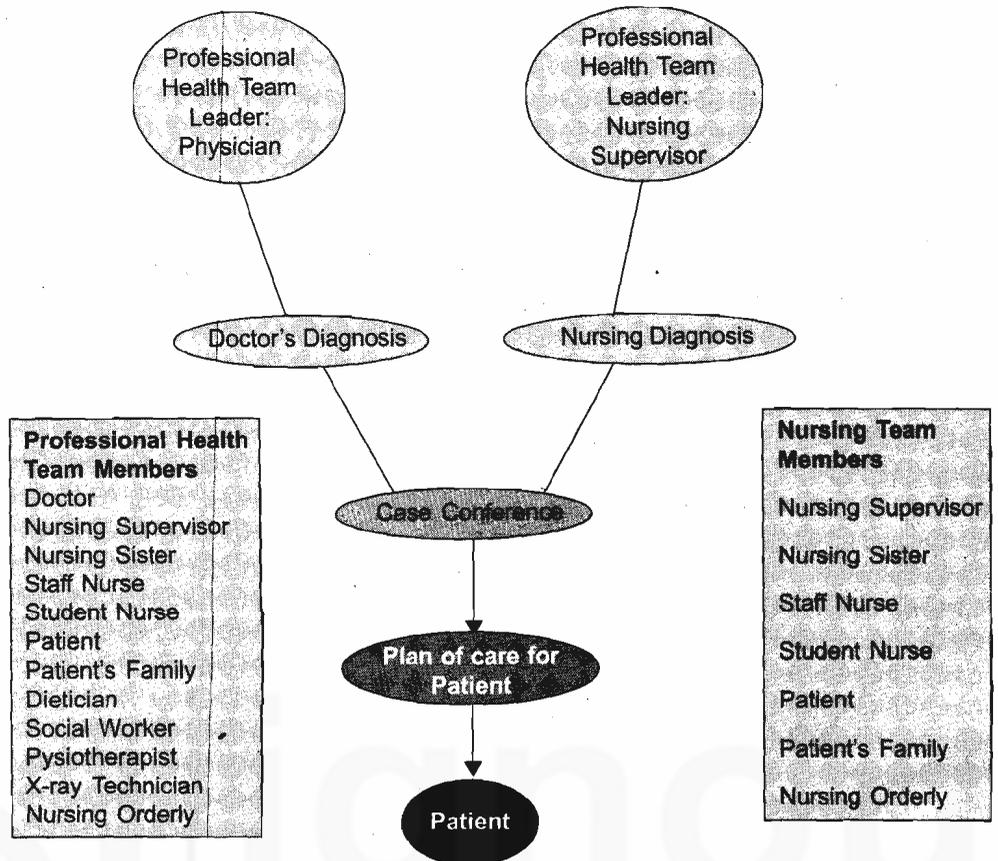


Fig. 4.2

4.4.2 Aims of Health Team

The major aims of health team are:

- 1) Promoting wellness
 - 2) Preventing illness
 - 3) Restoring health
 - 4) Facilitating coping mechanisms
- 1) **Promoting wellness:** The activities carried out to promote wellness involve health education to individual and community e.g. periodic health check up and need based health education.
 - 2) **Preventing illness:** The objective of illness prevention activities are to reduce the risk of illness, to promote good health habits and to maintain individuals optimal functioning e.g. encouraging immunization against various diseases.
 - 3) **Restoring health:** This area focuses on the individual with an illness, but ranges from early detection of disease to rehabilitation and teaching during recovery e.g. teaching colostomy care to a patient with cancer colon, who is to undergo surgery.
 - 4) **Facilitating Coping mechanisms:** Health team facilitates client and family, in coping with altered function and death. Altered function results in a decrease in an individual's ability to carry out activities of daily living e.g. modification of life style for amputated patient. Health team also provides care to both patient and families during the terminal illness.

4.4.3 Role of Nurse in Team Functioning

- 1) **Nurse as a Leader:** Leadership is the ability to direct or motivate others towards the achievement of predetermined goals; and the leader may work towards influencing an individual or a group. The nurse can use the dynamics of leadership for growth or change in many areas, including their client's health care pattern, health care agency, community and the health care system in general.

In client care the nurse has to take initiative in helping clients to achieve their maximum potentials, acquire new knowledge, solving problem and changing

- 2) **Nurse as a Communicator:** Nurses role as a communicator is very important in health care agency whether it may be between nurse to nurse, nurse to client, nurse to physician or other health care workers or nurse to family. Both as a team member and a team leader nurse must develop one of the most important skills of effective communication. It helps in improving personal relationship and better understanding towards patient/client care.
- 3) **Nurse as Teacher and Counsellor:** In a health team, the nurse assumes the role of a teacher and a counsellor, when clients have identifiable health needs. As a teacher she helps to identify his/her own health needs and how to overcome them. As a Counsellor she counsels and guides the client and the family to accept and cope up with the illness and lead a normal life without being overpowered by the limitation laid down by the illness.

In an academic setting, a nurse teacher educates and guides her subordinates and students to attain professional expertise. Whatever the situation may be, a nurse, teacher and counsellor need to possess interpersonal skills of warmth, friendliness, openness and empathy for successful teaching and counselling.
- 4) **Nurse as a Researcher:** Research provides an important step towards expanding and updating the professional role of Nursing and acquiring new knowledge to improve client care and being competent as a member of the interdisciplinary health team. This helps the professional members to place themselves at par with the other disciplines.
- 5) **Nurse as an Advocate:** In the health care team the nurse adopts the role of an advocate by informing the clients of their rights and by supporting decisions concerning health care choices. Moreover, the nurse also advises the ways and means to the right type of treatment and diagnostic procedures.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) List down the major aims of health team.

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- 2) List down the role of a nurse in a health team.

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

Teamwork is essential for successful achievements. Team is a group of people with various knowledge skills and attitude working together for a well defined goal. Team building requires specific knowledge skill and work. The skill and experience of people who make up the team are important characteristics of any team. The major aims of health team includes promoting wellness, preventing illness, restoring health and facilitating coping. Nurse plays very important role in a health team. She works as a leader, communicator, teacher, counsellor, researcher and an educator.

4.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The emergent leader is one who evolves from the group by acting as a leader consistently enough to become the actual leader of the team.

The situational leader is the one who emerges a leader from the group in response to a particular situation or need.

- 2) Stages of development of team are:
- 1) Forming
 - 2) Storming
 - 3) **Norming**
 - 4) **Performing**

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The major aims of health team are:

- Promoting wellness
- Preventing illness
- Restoring health
- Facilitating coping

- 2) In a health team nurse acts as a:

- Leader
- Communicator
- **Teacher** and Counsellor
- Researcher and
- Advocate