

SURGICAL CENTER: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR NURSES IN MANAGERIAL ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: *Objective: Analyze the challenges and strategies of nurses performing managerial activities in a surgical center. Method: Exploratory, descriptive study with a qualitative approach, involving six nurses by means of the Focus Group Technique, between April and August 2013. Data were submitted to thematic content analysis. Results: The main challenges noted were deficiency of material resources, communication noise, adequacy of personnel downsizing, and relationships with the multidisciplinary team. Key strategies include construction of co-management spaces to promote integration among professionals, conflict resolution and exchange of knowledge. Conclusions: Managerial activities involve the promotion of dialogic moments to coordinate the different processes in the surgical center to provide inputs to expand safety and quality of services provided. Keywords: Perioperative nursing. Hospital administration. Focus groups.*

The surgical center (SC) is a hospital unit where elective and emergency anesthetic-surgical procedures, diagnoses and therapeutic procedures are performed. This environment is characterized by invasive interventions and material resources of high precision and efficacy, requiring skilled professionals to meet the different needs of users, considering the high density of technologies and great variety of situations that build singular health care dynamics in this unit. The SC is considered to be a high-risk scenario where working processes are complex and interdisciplinary practices strongly depend on individual and team work under pressure and stress(1). A recent study attempted to identify the different care practices performed by nurses in the SC and their links with the institutional context where these practices are performed. The study emphasized the strategies developed by nurses to overcome interaction-related difficulties ensuing from the demand for coordinating patients' flow, inputs and health teams in the SC during procedures, influencing and being influenced by it(2). Regarding the nurses' role in managing the nursing team in the SC, a study aimed at analyzing the distribution of their workload in interventions and activities during the transoperative period suggests that the Nursing Interventions Classification would be the most accurate indicator to identify such condition, contributing to improve professionals allotment to meet the SC patients' needs(3). The search for safety during the transoperative period is becoming an important managerial activity assigned to nurses. However, a recent study that assessed health professionals' perceptions about safety culture in the SC noted a certain distance between managers and other professionals, with poor working conditions and weaknesses in the safety culture, recommending strategies like communication between teams and introduction of new managerial tools(1). In Brazil, some studies on the use of instruments to promote safety and prevent adverse events in the SC found that nursing teams contribute by providing crucial registries to develop actions with safety and the nurse, as a leader, must adopt and foster these initiatives(4-5). In this context, nurses face challenges to organize the several interfaces part of their working process, including managing nursing care

in the transoperative period. This condition implies coordination between the managerial and care dimensions of the nurses' work, making management a basic activity to achieve the core activity, i.e., care(6). Nurses' managerial activities are actions aimed to ensure nursing care quality and the institution's good work(6). The following actions are outstanding in their professional practice: nursing team sizing; exercise of leadership in the work environment; nursing care planning; nursing team capacity-building; material resources management; coordination of care delivery process; delivery of care and/or more complex procedures; and, evaluation of results ensuing from nursing actions(7). It is worth mentioning that activities performed by nurses at health institutions make them essential professionals to coordinate core services to promote continuity to nursing work. In addition, this activity can take on specific characteristics, depending on the work place, such as the SC. Recent publications(2-5,8) emphasize that professionals in this area should discuss, implement and evaluate their preoperative nursing practices, considering the demands for health systems qualification and safety without placing technological advances ahead the core feature of their work, i.e., care. Thinking over these aspects, these publications found concerns that refer to managerial skills developed by nurses in the SC everyday work, raising significant questions to the object of investigation: how are the nurses' challenges and strategies characterized when performing managerial activities in the surgical center? Therefore, the interest in developing this study was guided by the objective of analyzing nurses' challenges and strategies to perform managerial activities in surgical centers. **METHOD** This study was based on the dissertation named "Atividades Gerenciais do Enfermeiro em Centro Cirúrgico" presented to the Graduate Program in Nursing of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul(9). This study is characterized as exploratory, descriptive, and qualitative, which allows broadening knowledge on a given topic and flexibility to explore data. To validate meanings, reasons, values and beliefs of subjects to understand the phenomenon being studied, this study employs a focus that gathers individual and collective meaning of the subjects involved, as proposed by Minayo(10). This approach was also selected because of the need for exploring the topic in details, considering the reality of nurses working in the SC of a teaching hospital, gathering information through the focus group (FG) technique. It is operated around the possibility of understanding how different perceptions about nurses' managerial activities are founded, based on reflections and debates among participants. The study was carried out at the SC of a high-complexity teaching hospital that provides care to adult and pediatric patients in different surgical specialties of elective, urgency and emergency nature, and which also performs transplantations. The study sample was made up of six SC nurses, adopting the following inclusion criteria: voluntary adherence; interest in discussing the matter; effective service contract for over six months; and, availability to participate in data collection. The exclusion criteria were having a fixed-term service contract and leaves for several reasons. It is worth mentioning that literature recommends assembling small focus groups when the objective is to broaden discussions on given aspects(11). The focus group met three times from April to August 2013, at night, in a previously booked room to ensure privacy. The master's candidate researcher led the discussions as a facilitator, using a script of topics with guiding questions to the debate, assisted by a non-participant observer that collaborated with the logistical aspects of time control, proper and comfortable environment, handling of the

recorder and, also, making records of any singularity in verbal and non-verbal communication of the group in a field diary. The first meeting comprised two moments: introduction of participants, clarifications about the study and establishment of the group setting, in addition to the required detailing of ethical aspects of the study, including the signing of a free and informed consent form. The debates started around the guiding question “What are your insights about your managerial activities as a SC nurse”? In the second meeting, debates were fostered with the following guiding questions: “What are the implications of the SC nurses’ managerial activities?” and “Which managerial strategies are adopted by SC nurses”? The third meeting was held after the transcription and analysis of the material gathered up to then, to validate the summary chart of results prepared by the researcher. After being fully transcribed, the information obtained from the focus group was submitted to thematic content analysis (10). This technique comprised the following stages: pre-analysis; exploration of the material designing three thematic charts with the main managerial activities performed by nurses and related to the challenges/limitations and strategies discussed in the focus group; and, finally, the results, interpretation and discussions based on the study’s objectives and literature review.

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