Self-Assessment of Nursing Standards of Practice

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Abstract

This paper is self-assessment of nursing standards with the purpose of analyzing my current nursing practice behaviors. The American Nurses Association (2010) recognizes the need for nurses to continually assess their competencies and identify needs for additional knowledge, skills, personal growth, and integrative learning experiences. In analyzing my professional behaviors, I compare them with the Standards of Professional Performance outlined in the American Nurses Association (ANA) book, *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* (2010). I also identify goals for my professional career development with an action plan and method for evaluating and measuring my progress toward my goals.
Self-Assessment of Nursing Standards of Practice

The American Nurses Association’s (ANA) Standards of Professional Nursing Practice are “authoritative statements of the duties that all registered nurses, regardless of role, population, or specialty, are expected to perform competently” (ANA, 2010, p.31). The ANA’s Standards of Professional Performance describe a “competent level of behavior in the professional role, including ethics, education, evidence-based practice and research, quality of practice, communication, leadership, collaboration, professional practice evaluation, resource utilization, and environmental health” (ANA, 2010, p. 10). According to the ANA (2010), “registered nurses are accountable for their professional actions to themselves, their healthcare consumers, their peers, and ultimately to society” (p. 10). By critically analyzing behaviors of my own nursing practice as they relate to ANA’s Standards of Professional Performance, I will be able to develop a professional development plan that reflects ways in which I plan to attain and/or maintain competency in each standard as I continue in my nursing practice. This analysis and plan will guide me through my future professional growth.

Standards of Professional Performance

Standard 7. Ethics

Standard 7 is defined as: “The registered nurse practices ethically” (ANA, 2010, p. 47). A competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse delivers care in a manner that preserves and protects healthcare consumer autonomy, dignity, rights, values, and beliefs” (ANA, 2010, p. 47). In my current position as an intake/referral nurse for a home healthcare agency, I am often a main source of information for the patient as he or she transitions from the
hospital to home. If possible, I speak with the patients directly regarding their readiness for
home healthcare services while upholding and respecting their values and beliefs.

Other competencies listed within this standard are: “The registered nurse assists
healthcare consumers in self-determination and informed decision-making” and “The registered
nurse advocates for equitable healthcare consumer care” (ANA, 2010, p. 47). As I speak with
patients regarding home healthcare services, I provide them with all the necessary information
needed so that they can determine on their own, with the recommendation of their physician, if
our services fit their needs. I also advocate on their behalf for any other services that would
benefit them based on their diagnosis for the best possible patient outcomes.

Also important to the standard of ethics are the following competencies: “The registered
nurse upholds healthcare consumer confidentiality within legal and regulatory parameters” and
“The registered nurse maintains a therapeutic and professional healthcare consumer-nurse
relationship within appropriate professional role boundaries” (ANA, 2010, p. 47). Confidentiality is extremely important in nursing practice and within my role as an
intake/referral nurse. I maintain confidentiality strictly by not leaving any patient identifiers
lying out on my desk and by not speaking about patients to others or in non-clinical areas. I
maintain a professional healthcare consumer-nurse relationship with each of my patients by
speaking to them within appropriate professional boundaries.

**Standard 8. Education**

Standard 8 is defined as: “The registered nurse attains knowledge and competence that
reflects current nursing practice” (ANA, 2010, p. 49). One of the competencies listed within this
standard is: “The registered nurse participates in ongoing educational activities related to
appropriate knowledge bases and professional issues” (ANA, 2010, p. 49). I am meeting this
competency at this time because I am enrolled in school to advance my profession, attaining my Bachelor of Nursing. I also attend educational training provided by the organization for which I work. I am required to complete yearly educational competencies through my employer and obtain continuing education credits to maintain my licensure.

Another competency listed within Standard 8 is: “The registered nurse acquires knowledge and skills appropriate to the role, population, specialty, setting, or situation” (ANA, 2010, p. 49). I meet this competency by participating in educational programs within the home healthcare organization for which I work that are specifically geared toward home health. I also ask questions and seek learning from those more experienced in my position, and I utilize literature or online databases for questions about specific diagnoses or conditions of my patients.

Also important to the standard of education is the following competency: “The registered nurse maintains professional records that provide evidence of competence and lifelong learning” (ANA, 2010, p. 49). I am currently creating a portfolio which contains educational requirements that I have completed in my bachelor degree program. I also maintain records of continuing education credits that I have completed to maintain my licensure.

**Standard 9. Evidence-Based Practice and Research**

The ANA defines Standard 9 as: “The registered nurse integrates evidence and research findings into practice” (ANA, 2010, p. 51). A competency within this standard is listed as: “The registered nurse utilizes current evidence-based nursing knowledge, including research findings, to guide practice” (ANA, 2010, p. 51). Because I am currently in school, I incorporate research and information attained from my classes into my practice. I also utilize evidence-based nursing knowledge gained from nursing journals and articles posted within the organization for which I work.
Another competency listed within the standard of evidence-based practice and research is: “The registered nurse incorporates evidence when initiating changes in nursing practice” (ANA, 2010, p. 51). While change within any context is difficult, I do try to utilize evidence when initiating changes in my practice. With changes occurring in my nursing practice recently, I have incorporated knowledge that I have gained from research done for school.

The last competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse shares personal or third-party research findings with colleagues and peers” (ANA, 2010, p. 51). I meet this competency often as I share with my colleagues, recent research obtained in my classes. There are also issues that come up within my daily practice for which research is needed. Because I work in close proximity to others, I often share with them the answers that I come up with in my research.

**Standard 10. Quality of Practice**

Standard 10 is defined as: “The registered nurse contributes to quality nursing practice” (ANA, 2010, p. 52). The first competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse demonstrates quality by documenting the application of the nursing process in a responsible, accountable, and ethical manner” (ANA, 2010, p. 52). I meet this competency daily in the way that I document new referrals, resumptions of care, and orders with the home health agency for which I work.

Another competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse participates in quality improvement” (ANA, 2010, p. 52). I meet this competency in a variety of ways in my daily nursing practice. One of my main roles in my position is to facilitate transition for patients from the hospital to the homecare setting. I communicate with patients directly to answer questions about home healthcare and gain an understanding of their needs. The ANA states that
an activity within this competency to meet this standard is “formulating recommendations to improve nursing practice or outcomes” (ANA, 2010, p. 52). When I receive a referral for a patient in need of home health services, I recommend and advocate for any other services that could help produce better patient outcomes.

**Standard 11. Communication**

Standard 11 is defined as: “The registered nurse communicates effectively in a variety of formats in all areas of practice” (ANA, 2010, p. 54). Communication in my role as an intake/referral nurse is somewhat limited to phone and email communication. I have very little face to face contact with patients or physicians. However, communication is a very important part of my job, regardless of the format.

One of the competencies listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse assesses her or his own communication skills in encounters with healthcare consumers, families, and colleagues” (ANA, 2010, p. 54). Because communication is so important in my role, whether it be with patients, physicians, or colleagues, I continuously assess my own communication following each interaction to determine if I handled the call or email in the best possible way. In this way I am working to improve my nursing practice and achieve the best patient outcomes.

Another competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse seeks continuous improvement of communication and conflict resolution skills” (ANA, 2010, p. 54). Improvement of conflict resolution skills is something I strive very hard to improve because this has been an area of weakness in the past. Often, if conflict arises within an interaction, I consult with colleagues and the management team to determine if it was handled in the best possible way.
The last competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse contributes her or his own professional perspectives in discussions with the interprofessional team” (ANA, 2010, p. 54). This is an integral part of my growth as a professional nurse. I work closely with other nurses performing the same role in managing home health referrals so we continuously discuss issues throughout the day. I often give my professional perspective to the other nurses and receive their perspectives as well.

**Standard 12. Leadership**

Standard 12 is defined as: “The registered nurse demonstrates leadership in the professional practice setting and the profession” (ANA, 2010, p. 55). Leadership is an area in which I am striving for growth. The first competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse oversees the nursing care given by others while retaining accountability for the quality of care given to the healthcare consumer” (ANA, 2010, p. 55). This is an area of needed improvement. I have never held a position in which I have overseen the nursing care given by others. However, I have been responsible for overseeing the care given by nonlicensed personnel and retained accountability for the quality of their care given to the patient.

Some other competencies listed within this standard include: “The registered nurse treats colleagues with respect, trust, and dignity” and “The registered nurse communicates effectively with the healthcare consumer and colleagues” (ANA, 2010, p. 55). These are areas in which I excel. Treating others with respect, trust, and dignity is a quality that I value very much in my nursing practice and personally, and communication is a very important part of my current nursing role.

The final competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse participates in efforts to influence healthcare policy involving healthcare consumers and the profession” (ANA,
This, also, is an area in which improvement is needed. I do not presently participate in efforts to influence healthcare policy.

**Standard 13. Collaboration**

Standard 13 is defined as: “The registered nurse collaborates with the healthcare consumer, family, and others in the conduct of nursing practice” (ANA, 2010, p. 57). Collaboration is fundamental to my role as a professional nurse. The first competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse partners with others to effect change and produce positive outcomes through the sharing of knowledge of the healthcare consumer and/or the situation” (ANA, 2010, p. 57). Partnering with others within the organization for which I work is a very important part of my job. I often receive referrals for patients in need of services other than just nursing care. In these situations, I collaborate with physical and/or occupational therapists, social workers, dieticians, and others to achieve the best outcomes for the patients.

Another competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse cooperates in creating a documented plan focused on outcomes and decisions related to care and delivery of services that indicates communication with healthcare consumers, families, and others” (ANA, 2010, p. 57). This competency describes some very important tasks in my professional nursing role. I am often a main source of communication between the physicians and the patients within the organization for which I work. I discuss cases and plans of care with the physician and make changes as directed to achieve optimal patient outcomes.

**Standard 14. Professional Practice Evaluation**

Standard 14 is defined as: “The registered nurse evaluates her or his own nursing practice in relation to professional practice standards and guidelines, relevant statutes, rules, and regulations” (ANA, 2010, p. 59). This paper, Self-assessment of Nursing Standards, is one way
to show that I am meeting this standard. By writing this I am evaluating ANA’s Standard of Professional Performance.

A competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse engages in self-evaluation of practice on a regular basis, identifying areas of strength as well as areas in which professional growth would be beneficial” (ANA, 2010, p. 59). I receive a formal review by my manager on a yearly basis. Included in the review is an area in which we are given an opportunity to evaluate ourselves. I take full advantage of this opportunity as a way to determine areas in which improvement is needed and I then discuss these areas with my manager.

Another competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse obtains informal feedback regarding her or his own practice from healthcare consumers, peers, professional colleagues, and others” (ANA, 2010, p. 59). I believe that performance feedback is integral to professional growth, and I welcome and appreciate any feedback of my practice behaviors, particularly from my colleagues who I am in close contact with on a daily basis.

**Standard 15. Resource Utilization**

Standard 15 is defined as: “The registered nurse utilizes appropriate resources to plan and provide nursing services that are safe, effective, and financially responsible” (ANA, 2010, p. 60). Some of the competencies listed within this standard include: “The registered nurse assesses individual healthcare consumer care needs and resources available to achieve desired outcomes” and “The registered nurse assists the healthcare consumer and family in identifying and securing appropriate services to address needs across the healthcare continuum” (ANA, 2010, p. 60). When I receive a new referral for patient in need of home health services, one of the first steps is to determine the specific needs of the patient and facilitate a plan to meet those needs based on resources available within our organization. If I am unable to meet the patient’s needs due to a
lack of a specific resource, I utilize appropriate means of referring them to a resource that could meet their needs.

One other very important competency listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse assists the healthcare consumer and family in factoring costs, risks, and benefits in decisions about treatment and care” (ANA, 2010, p. 60). Financial cost of healthcare is a very important factor in the planning of care. For many patients, costs are the most important factor in determining their plan of care. When I receive a referral for a patient in need of home healthcare services, I collaborate with the insurance and finance department for the organization to help the patient plan the financial impact of care. If a patient is unable to receive needed care due to a lack of insurance, I make a referral through our managers for charity care funded through united way.

Standard 16. Environmental Health

The ANA defines the final Standard of Professional Performance as: “The registered nurse practices in an environmentally safe and healthy manner” (ANA, 2010, p. 61). One of the competencies listed within this standard is: “The registered nurse attains knowledge of environmental health concepts, such as implementation of environmental health strategies” (ANA, 2010, p. 61). The way that I am meeting this standard is by obtaining a brief assessment of the environment in which the care will be provided by our field staff nurses. If I receive a referral for a patient for whom the home and living arrangements seem unsafe, I ensure appropriate notification to the management team to determine if the referral is appropriate. Other than gaining a verbal assessment of the homes of the patients, I do not focus a great deal on environmental health in my nursing practice because I am currently working within an office with no direct patient contact.
Professional Development Plan

My professional development plan consists of goals and activities that will allow me to grow professionally as a nurse and provide optimal care to patients. My overall objective in developing a professional plan is to formulate and plan an approach of achieving my goals to advance my profession and maintain competency in the Standards of Nursing defined by the American Nurses Association (2010).

Five-Year Goals

My five-year goals are centered on gaining more clinical nursing experience and growing as a professional nurse. Specifically, my first goal is to complete my Bachelor of Nursing and return to practice in the hospital setting. I plan to gain additional clinical experience in pediatric nursing and become certified in pediatric oncology nursing. I am currently volunteering with the Pediatric Oncology Resource Team in a large hospital system and hope to use this experience, as well as personal experience with pediatric oncology, to attain my goal. Standard 8, Education, will be critical to this goal as I gain knowledge in a new area of nursing. Professional nursing in pediatric oncology is also an excellent way to maintain competency in Standard 9, Evidence Based Practice and Research. Cancer research is continually being performed and will be a major guiding factor in my practice. My action plan for attaining this goal is to immediately begin preparing for a career change by searching and applying for positions in pediatric nursing to gain clinical experience with the pediatric population and then transfer in to oncology. Evaluation of this plan will be determined by my ability to attain a position in pediatric oncology and obtain certification in this area within one year.
Another five-year goal that I have is to complete my Master’s Degree in Nursing. Specifically, I plan to take a one to two year break from school and focus solely on my career and then I am going to enroll in a Master’s Degree program. I plan to complete this program within two years of enrolling to further advance my profession. This, again, will be an excellent way to maintain competency in Standard 8, Education. Obtaining my Master’s Degree will also allow me to maintain competency in Standard 10, Quality of Practice, and it will help me to improve my leadership skill, reflecting Standard 12, Leadership. My action plan is to be enrolled in a Master’s Degree program by January 2014 and complete my degree by December 2016. Evaluation of this plan will simply be my ability to complete my Master’s Degree by the end of 2016.

Ten-Year Goals

My ten-year goals are focused on maintaining and improving competency in the Standard of Nursing. I plan to improve in the Standards of Communication and Leadership to help me to continue growth as professional nurse and leader within the community. Over the next ten years, I hope to continue to gain experience in pediatric nursing and assist others to excel in their practice as well.

The main goal that I hope to attain in the next ten years is to become a nursing educator in a college of nursing. My action plan to attain this goal is to focus my Master’s Degree program on education, and after attaining my degree, I will obtain a teaching position in college of nursing. I plan to continue clinical nursing practice part-time and teach part-time as well. My goal is to obtain a teaching position within the next ten years so that I can help others to grow as professional nurses and attain their own goals. Evaluation of this plan will be my ability to attain a position teaching nursing education by 2021.
Conclusion

This self-assessment of nursing standards has given me the opportunity to critically review my skills and behaviors. By doing this, I am able to identify needs for additional knowledge, skills, and learning experiences so that I can continue to grow as a professional nurse. Self-assessment of nursing practice and continued growth and learning are essential for the nurse to provide quality healthcare to achieve optimal patient outcomes. My professional development plan with goals and an action plan to attain the goals is a very valuable tool to plan for my future professional growth. By planning for the future, with a method of evaluation, I will be more equipped and prepared to reach my goal of becoming a nurse educator.
References