

# Nurse Managers on Front Line against New Coronavirus

Ana Luiza Ferreira Aydogdu

Dept. of Nursing Management, Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, Istanbul, Turkey

Author's Mail id: [luizafl@gmail.com](mailto:luizafl@gmail.com), Tel.: +905356370703

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**Abstract**— The world has been living atypical days due to the disease caused by the new coronavirus which appeared in China in late December 2019 and soon became a pandemic. Nurses are risking their lives on the frontline fighting COVID-19. Good nursing management is vital for the team to be successful. The aim of the study was to contextualize the role of nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a narrative review, based on literature about nurse managers acting against the new coronavirus. Nurses have always taken risks when performing their duties. With the emergence of the new coronavirus disease pandemic, their working conditions became even more difficult. The nurse manager had to quickly adapt herself to ensure the nursing team's and patients' safety in face of an unknown and highly contagious disease. As the new coronavirus emerged, nursing management became even more important, being crucial for the control of the pandemic. Some gaps were noticed in nursing leadership, nurse managers should learn by the current crisis, being ready and preparing their team for future crises.

**Keywords**—Coronavirus, Leadership, Nurse Managers, Nursing.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) or COVID-19 today, May 18, 2020, is present in 188 countries. There are already 4,731,987 cases of the disease in the world and 315,496 deaths [1]. The health care system in several countries overwhelmed due to the illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2. The already difficult working conditions of healthcare workers got even worse [2]; [3]; [4]; [5].

There are approximately 59 million healthcare workers in the world and 28 million are part of the nursing team. These professionals, who have always been exposed to various physical and psychological risks [6]; [7], are currently risking their lives in the fight against SARS-CoV-2, being infected and dying [8]. Nurses spend long periods giving direct patient care [2], administering medications, feeding patients, operating medical devices, providing hygiene care for patients, performing tests for disease diagnosis, among many other duties. So, they are always in situations where they may have contact with blood, body fluids, excretions or secretions, which represent big risks to their health.

The pandemic of COVID-19 brought lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), changes in nursing work schedule, illness of colleagues and fear of contagion [2]; [3]; [4]; [5], but also brought the need to be even closer to patients to provide appropriate care.

At the head of the nursing team is the manager, planning for all tasks to be performed properly [9]. The nursing manager needs to be prepared to follow the changes that

occur continuously in the healthcare sector to guarantee quality nursing care to all patients [10].

Nothing is more important than a good manager for the success of an organization. Without good managers the resources cannot become good products. When the product is healthcare the role of the manager becomes even more important, because any mistake can lead to irremediable consequences. Planning is the first and the most important functions of management, but during a state of crisis unplanned changes occur, so the manager needs to be ready to make decisions and lead the team [11]; [12].

When the SARS-CoV-2 emerged the nursing manager had to quickly adapt herself to this new reality and she also had to prepare her team to care patients infected with a highly contagious and little-known disease, providing professionals with the necessary safety and support. The nursing manager is a caregiver, an administrator, a researcher and also an educator. She provides patient care, she plans and organizes all the nursing functions to be performed, researches new ways of nursing care and trains the staff and she also educates patients [13]. So, when the COVID-19 pandemic started the nursing manager had to learn fast about this new disease to adapting the nursing caring and also protect the team.

The aim of this article was to contextualize the role of nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The paper is organized as follows: section I contains the introduction; section II discusses related works; section III explains the methodology; section IV presents the results of the study and discussion of the findings. And finally, section V concludes the paper and presents future scope.

## II. RELATED WORK

According to reference [13] the nurse managers represent the category in the general direction of the hospitals and at the same time, direct the nursing team to achieve the contractual goals, choosing the care model that will be applied and ensuring compliance with the rules and legislation. Reference [10] pointed that in order for nursing to keep up with changes, it is crucial the presence of effective leaders and executive nurses who have adopted the leadership spirit and attitude. Nurses should learn and develop their management and leadership behaviors in order to carry the nursing profession to the future by using their transformative, integrative and problem-solving skills. Reference [14] is a study made during the influenza pandemic in China pointed that it's important that administrators provide support to healthcare personnel during the pandemic. Reference [15], research from South Korea about experiences of nurses working during the Middle East respiratory syndrome pandemic, focused on the importance of nurse managers and hospital administrators in understanding that overload of nurses' working during pandemics can cause them burned out, which may have negative effect on quality of nursing care. Reference [16] pointed that nurses working in Hong Kong during the outbreak of SARS had their physical and psychological health negatively impacted and also pointed to the importance of health care facilities and workers being ready for future crises.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Narrative review, based on literature about the role of nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Narrative review is a type of method in which the selection criteria for inclusion of articles may not be specified explicitly, it does not apply sophisticated and exhaustive search strategies, being a broad publication. Its strength point is not related to methodological rigor, but to the reflective capacity to interpret the information collected [17]; [18]; [19].

The material was collected in May 2020, through the reading, analysis and interpretation of texts published by WHO, ICN and ILO on their websites. In an attempt to access scientific articles, a search was made on Google Scholar, using the descriptors: "Coronavirus", "Leadership", "Nurse managers", "Nursing"; diversified word combinations were made using "AND", "OR". The search for articles published in 2020, whose full and free texts were available on the internet in English or Portuguese was also held in May 2020. It was discussed studies that covered the theme nurse managers and COVID-19 pandemic.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After selecting the studies, supported by the narrative review, two themes emerged for reflection: changes in the

nurses' work routine and roles of nurse managers during the new coronavirus pandemic.

### Changes in the Nurses' Work Routine

When more and more patients infected with SARS-CoV-2 were coming to hospitals, it was necessary to relocate and hire new nurses and the working hours were changed. Together with COVID-19 also came the threat to the physical and psychological health of the nurses, thus emerging the need to have PPE in sufficient quantities and to provide psycho-social support to these professionals. Nurses needed to learn to care for patients who were diagnosed with a new coronavirus infection and also learn to protect themselves and others.

There was an increase in demand in health institutions due to the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus, especially in some departments, as Intensive Care Units (ICUs), emergencies and others [20]; [21]. Therefore, employees were relocated, new professionals were hired, and also volunteers were accepted in some establishments [20]. It was pointed that the nursing manager had to plan new work schedules. As the virus is little-known, the guidelines for the treatment of patients and prevention measures changes constantly [22]. The nursing manager needed to improve herself, and she had to train the team according to the new information that was arriving.

SARS-CoV-2 spreads mainly through the respiratory tract and direct contact [23]. Representing a great risk for nurses, who remain in direct contact with patients for a long time. There was a need to use PPE [3]; [5]. The manager then had to reassess the amount of PPE needed by the sector, maintaining an adequate stock and also supervising employees for their correct use.

Some nurses are taking long shifts without break, they are becoming tired, stressed and anguished in the face of a so big threat as the COVID-19 [3]; [4]; [5]; [21]. The manager had to control her own feelings being a role model for the nursing team, recognizing fears and stress symptoms and providing support to those in need.

### Roles of Nurse Managers during the New Coronavirus Pandemic

During the covid-19 pandemic, many positive aspects were noted regarding the performance of nurse managers, but also gaps in the nursing leadership were noticed. There are some areas of leadership that could be improved to better serve the nursing itself, patients, their families and communities [24].

It was a challenge for nurse managers to support newly deployed nurses during the period of crisis [25]. With the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus, new employees were relocated and others were hired, among them are experienced and inexperienced nurses. When defining the work schedule, it is up to the nurse manager to ensure that there are always senior nurses with the newly arrived ones [26]. The nurse manager had to make new plans and

reorganize the unit's tasks, informing the hospital administration in case of need to hire more employees, aiming not to overload the members of the nursing team. The training of newly hired nurses and support staff is also the responsibility of the nurse manager [5]; [20]; [26].

When defining the new work schedules, the nurse manager had to plan flexible hours, so that staff nurses could rest and eat healthy and properly. The manager also had to ensure that the staff nurses had enough time to perform their personal tasks [20]; [26].

It is up to the nurse manager to coordinate the PPE stock, reporting problems to the hospital administration regarding their quantity and quality. The nurse manager researches and shares knowledge related to all preventive measures, including correct hand washing, use and disposal of PPE, monitoring and training the staff for proper use of the protective equipment. Paying even more attention to interns, trainees and volunteers at the unit [20]; [22]. The nurse manager also had to relocate that employees over 60 and with chronic diseases to have not direct contact with COVID-19 patients, thus reducing the risk of contagion [22]; [27].

The manager had to pay attention to the mental health of nursing team, without forgetting her own. It was noticed the importance of providing knowledge about practical skills to help cope with stress during the pandemic, making sure that the members of the nursing team knew where to get mental and psychosocial support if necessary. It was also essential to rotate employees between higher-stress to lower-stress functions [20]; [26].

Research about SARS-CoV-2 is being carried out constantly, so nurse managers follow the changes in treatment, also paying attention to the nursing care practiced around the world, in order to train staff nurses and ensure good care for patients.

A smooth flow of information and knowledge between employees of health facilities was essential to guarantee the safety of healthcare workers and patients. It was pointed the importance of nurse managers sharing knowledge and giving security to the staff. So, if there are any problems threatening the nurses' physical or mental health they should count on their managers [4]; [20]; [26]. The nurse manager had to act knowing that the pandemic would not end in a few days; a long-term plan had to be done, taking care of the health of all nursing team members [26].

Nurses must be physically and psychologically well to perform their jobs optimally, especially under difficult conditions. Leaders must know that actions and supportive behaviors can positively influence the staff. The nurse manager must always be well-informed, improving and providing current knowledge to her team.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The pandemic caused by the new coronavirus represents a big threat to the entire world. The aim of this article was to contextualize the role of nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was clear that nursing has a very important role during pandemics such as the current one and that nurse managers should be ready to lead the nurse team during crises that can emerge at any time in the health field. Staff nurses and nurses managers have been being crucial during the pandemic but also gaps in nursing leadership were reported, what show that a lot more must be done.

Good management is important for the success of any project. It is the nurse manager who plans all the time how and when the nursing numerous tasks will be performed. In risky situations it is difficult to make decisions, but at the same time they are crucial to reach the objectives. Just as the nursing team plays a key role in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic, the nurse manager carries with her all the responsibilities for planning, organizing, directing and controlling her team to achieve positive results in the fight against the new coronavirus.

Nurse managers should keep improving themselves to fulfill their duties during the current pandemic, which will still probably last long to end, learning by this experience, being ready and also preparing the team for future crises. Further studies should explore the relation between staff nurses and nurse managers in times of crisis.

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## AUTHORS PROFILE

Mrs. A L F Aydogdu is a nurse graduated from Fluminense Federal University (UFF-2002), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She has a Post-Graduation degree in Public Health Nursing at Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO-2004). Master in Hospitals and Health Institutions Administration at Istanbul University - 2016. She worked for seven years as an educational nurse of the neonatal intensive care unit at a private hospital in Istanbul, Turkey. Currently, she is a Doctoral student in Nursing Administration at Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Istanbul University - Cerrahpasa. Istanbul, Turkey.

