

Ethical Guidelines of Nursing

The aim of the ethical guidelines of nursing is to provide support for all nurses in their everyday decision-making concerning ethical questions of nursing. Oriented to all nurses, other personnel within health care, and the general public, these guidelines express the mission of nurses in society and the general principles of nursing.

I The mission of nurses

The mission of the nurse is to promote and maintain the health of population, prevent illness, and alleviate suffering.

The nurse helps people of all ages in different situations. The nurse serves individuals, families, and communities. The nurse aims to support and increase the personal resources of individuals and improve their quality of life.

II Nurses and patients

The nurse is responsible to her actions, first of all, to the patients who need her help and care. The nurse protects human life and improves the individual well-being of patients. The nurse encounters her patients as valuable human beings and creates a nursing environment which takes into consideration the values, convictions and traditions of individuals.

The nurse respects the autonomy and self-determination of the patient and gives him an opportunity to participate in decisions concerning his own care. The nurse realizes that all the information given by the patient is confidential and she uses judgment in sharing this information with other people involved in nursing.

The nurse treats the patient as a fellow human being; she listens to the patient and empathizes with him. The relationship between nurse and patient is based upon open interaction and mutual trust.

The nurse exercises impartiality in her work. She treats every patient equally well according to the individual needs of the patient irrespective of the illness, sex, age, creed, language, traditions, race, colour, political opinion or social status of the patient.

III The work and professional competence of nurses

The nurse is personally responsible for her work. She evaluates her own and others' competence when receiving her assignments and when giving assignments to others. Professional nurse has an obligation to continuously develop her competence.

Nurses working in the same unit are jointly responsible for the optimal quality of nursing and the continuous improvement of the quality of nursing in their unit.

IV Nurses and their colleagues

Nurses support each other in the decision-making concerning the care of patients, and their own work capacity and professional development.

Nurses respect the expertise of other professions as well as their own. They aim at fruitful cooperation with other professionals involved in care.

Nurses see to it that no professional involved in care acts unethically toward patients.

V Nurses and society

The nurse participates in discussion and decision-making concerning the health, quality of life and well-being of people, both on national and international levels.

The nurse collaborates with the families and significant others of patients; she encourages the families' participation in the care. The nurse functions actively in empowering people in issues of health. She cooperates with volunteer workers, disabled people's organizations and patient associations.

The nurse participates in the work of international health organizations in the exchange of professional knowledge and skills. She bears global responsibility for the development of living conditions concerning health and social affairs, and she promotes equality, tolerance and joint responsibility.

VI Nurses and the nursing profession

Nurses see to it that the members of the nursing profession accomplish their mission in a dignified manner. The nursing profession supports the moral and ethical development of its members, and controls that the humane nature of nursing is preserved.

Nurses look after the well-being of the members of their profession. Their professional organization will function actively in order to secure just social and economic working conditions for its members.

Nurses are responsible for the expertise of their profession. They are active in developing a core of professional knowledge, and they enhance nursing education and the scientific base of nursing. The enhancement of nursing expertise should be reflected in the improved well-being of population.

These Ethical Guidelines of Nursing have been approved by the Assembly of the Finnish Nurses Association on September 28, 1996.