



Millennial Nurse Leaders Must Learn Empathy



According to an article published in *Becker's Infection Control & Clinical Quality*, hospital executives need to understand a few key principles to teach younger nurses so that they are able to be the next wave of leaders in the field.

While there are time-tested principles/practices already in place, the way they are delivered to this new class of millennial nurses must evolve. The key qualities of nurse leaders should include the ability to:

1. Foster trust and teamwork
2. Model compassion and empathy
3. Provide support in the form of human, material, and emotional resources
4. Communicate effectively with patients, physicians and other nurses
5. Be visible and accessible
6. Acknowledge the complexity and the gravity of the work nurses do

Some believe that empathy cannot be taught but according to Press Ganey CNO Christy Dempsey., it is entirely possible to do so and teaching nurse leaders empathy can in fact build trust and would allow them to be more compassionate leaders.

One way of developing empathy is role playing. This strategy is already being applied at one hospital in Nevada. Nurses are asked to put their belongings in the staff locker and then wait in the emergency room for hours. When they are finally called into ER, the trainers lead them to a room, close the curtain and talk about the nurse from the other side of the curtain. Although the nurse can hear everything but she doesn't know what is happening.

"Then the preceptor comes in and says, 'This is what your patients go through every day; don't forget it'," says Ms. Dempsey. "But the training isn't a one-and-done. The patient experience in its totality isn't something that you can talk about one time at orientation and expect the lesson to stick for a 20-year career."

Young nurses require leaders who can work with them beyond the preceptor orientation. They need mentors who can make them understand the key elements of effective nurse leadership.

Source: [Becker's Infection Control & Clinical Quality](#)

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