

Competency Enhancement among Nurses: A Review Article

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Abstract:

For maintaining high standards of patient care, professional accountability, and healthcare efficiency Competency Enhancement among nurses is very much essential. Competencies among nurses encompasses the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and professional judgment required for effective and safe practice. In the era of rapid advancement of healthcare technologies, changing patient needs and increasing complexity of healthcare systems, continuous competency development has become essentially required component for nursing practice. In this review article reviewer has discusses the concept of competency, processes of competency enhancement, competency among nurses and strategies for competency development for nurses. This article also highlights the role of competency-based education in healthcare organizations, and continuous professional development in strengthening Nursing Competencies. It also emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning, mentorship, simulation training, interprofessional collaboration, and evidence-based practice in improving nursing performance and patient care outcomes.

Keywords: Competency, Competency Enhancement, Nursing Competency, Competency-Based Education, Professional Development, Nursing Education

Introduction:

Competency means to the ability of an individual to perform tasks effectively through the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and professional judgment. Using competency in healthcare settings, is taken as fundamental for delivering safe, efficient, and high-quality patient care. The American Nurses Association (ANA) defines competency an expected, measurable level of performance that integrates four key pillars: **knowledge, skills, abilities and judgment**.¹ competency is required by both, a novice and an experienced nurse. An experienced nurse can avail training specially when she started working in a new unfamiliar environment. After being competent both of them can demonstrate a proficient performance. Therefore, competency assessment and continuous professional development are necessary components of healthcare systems.²

Competencies are commonly including the technical skills, behavioural and leadership capacities. Technical competencies include clinical knowledge and practical skills of particular profession, while behavioural competencies include communication skills, a sense of teamwork, emotional intelligence and problem-solving abilities of an individual. Leadership competencies encompass integrity, decision-making, conflict management and taking initiative, all of these are essential for effective leadership in healthcare.³⁻⁴

Competency-based approaches are used up to a great extent in recruitment process, performance appraisal procedures, staff development activities and career advancement. Competency management strategies include competency mapping, competency assessment, individualized learning plans and it is also important to do a periodic revision of competency frameworks to meet evolving healthcare facility demands.⁵

Competency Enhancement:

Competency enhancement refers to a continuous process of improving professional knowledge, clinical skills, attitudes and abilities to adapt to the changing work environments and improving job performance. Competency Enhancement also includes strengthening the existing competencies as well as acquiring new competencies through continue education, skill training and learnings throughout the life.⁶

With the identification of competency needs through self-assessment, feedback, and organizational expectations, the competency enhancement process can be begun. To facilitates effective competency development, Setting clear and measurable goals is very important.⁷ on going and a Continuous learning through workshops, seminars, training programs, and practical exposures is essential for maintaining professional competence in today's dynamic healthcare settings.⁸ Reflective practice and regular feedback help healthcare professionals to identify strong and weak areas of their professional competencies which help them to identify areas requiring improvement.⁹ For enabling professionals, to Respond effectively to technological and organizational changes **Adaptability** and **Flexibility** are also equally important.¹⁰

Common strategies for competency enhancement can be include in form of skill assessment program, individualized development plans, mentorship for professionals, networking, practice-based learning and continuous professional development programs. For improving professional performance and expertise among professionals, deliberate practice and lifelong learning have been identified as key factors.¹¹⁻¹²

In India also, competency enhancement has become increasingly important because of rapid technological advancements and changing workforce requirements. Government initiatives such as the Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) focus on vocational training and skill certification to improve employability and workforce competence in India.¹³⁻¹⁴ Collaboration between industries and educational institutions, digital learning platforms and entrepreneurship programs can further contribute to competency development.¹⁵

Competency Enhancement among Nurses:

Nursing competency involves the integration of clinical knowledge, psychomotor skills, attitudes, values, communication abilities and professional behaviours necessary for safe and effective nursing care of client and family. According to the Royal College of Nursing, competent nurses possess updated knowledge and skills and able to apply them appropriately according to patient needs.¹⁶

Nursing competency may include several domains such as clinical skills, critical thinking, communication skills, cultural competence, ethical consideration in practice, leadership and teamwork. Patricia Benner described nursing competency development through five stages which includes: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert.² Competent Nurses can contribute significantly to patient safety, reduction of medical errors, improved healthcare outcomes and efficient healthcare delivery among needed.

For competency enhancement among nurses, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) plays a central role. Nurses are expected to update their competencies regularly through participating and organising

various continuing education programs such as conferences, workshops, simulation training and through evidence-based practices.¹⁷ Continuous Professional Development (CPD) not only enhances clinical competence but also improves professional confidence, leadership abilities, and job satisfaction.

Assessment of nursing competency is essential for ensuring professional standards and quality assurance in nursing care. Performance evaluation, simulation-based assessment, self-assessment, peer feedback, certification, licensure and continuing education records are methods of competency assessment among nurses.¹⁸ These approaches help identify knowledge and skill gaps and also guide targeted competency development.

Healthcare organizations play an important role in promoting competency enhancement by providing opportunities to access training programs, mentorship programs, structured orientation and supportive learning environments. It has been seen that organizational support is significantly associated with improved nursing performance and professional retention.¹⁹

Strategies for Competency Enhancement among Nurses may include:

Several strategies are used to strengthen nursing competencies and improve patient care outcomes. Few of them can be discussed as-

1. **Continuing Education:** Continuing education through workshops, conferences, online courses and advanced academic programs helps nurses to be updated with emerging healthcare technologies and evidence-based clinical practices in health care system.¹⁹
2. **Simulation-Based Training:** Simulation-based education allows nurses to practice clinical procedures, critical thinking and decision-making in controlled environments without compromising patient safety. Simulation training significantly improves confidence, technical skills and emergency preparedness and it acts as one of the best methods for teaching and learning when best practices guidelines are adhered to.²⁰
3. **Mentorship and Preceptorship:** Mentorship & preceptorship programs support professional growth by pairing novice nurses with experienced professionals who provide guidance, supervision, and constructive feedback. The experienced nurses also need to be updated their knowledge and skills in clinical teaching in order to provide effective clinical learning for students.²¹
4. **Interprofessional Collaboration:** Collaboration among healthcare professionals promotes teamwork, communication and shared learning so it ultimately improving healthcare outcomes and patient safety. Using interprofessional rounds, interprofessional checklists and Interprofessional meetings also improve adherence & use of healthcare resources.²²
5. **Reflective Practice:** Reflective practices among nurses encourages them to critically analyse their experiences, identify learning needs and continuously improve their professional performance.²³
6. **Technology Integration:** The integration of technologies in form of electronic health records, virtual learning systems, mobile learning applications and clinical decision-support systems supporting the competency enhancement among health care workers including nurses by improving access to educational resources and clinical information. With the potential benefits of these technologies, there are several challenges in their implementation, including the data privacy concerns, system integration and clinician acceptance.²⁴
7. **Evidence-Based Practice:** Engagement in research with finding and implementing the evidence-based practice while delivering nursing care ensures that nursing care is based on the latest scientific evidence, thereby it is improving the quality and safety of patient care.²⁵

8. Competency-Based Education in Nursing: Competency-Based Education (CBE) is an outcome-oriented educational approach which focuses on measurable learning outcomes and acquisition of practical skill. According to Kelly, competency-based education integrates knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for the professional nursing practice.²⁶

Competency-Based Education (CBE) mainly emphasizes on:

- Mastery in learning
- Authentic assessment of teaching and learning
- Individualized learning
- Continuous skill development
- Application of knowledge in real-life professional practices

The primary goal of CBE is to ensure that nursing graduates are adequately prepared to perform competently in clinical nursing practices and meet healthcare demands effectively.

Challenges in Competency Enhancement:

Competency is a very crucial and important concept in nursing education and practice but still there is no universally accepted definition for competency in nursing hence definition of competency in nursing profession is a challenge in itself. But based on literature review it is clear that competence is a mix of knowledge, skills and attitude.²⁷

Despite importance of competency enhancement among nurses, they also face several challenges. Some of these are heavy workloads, time constraints, workforce shortages, financial limitations and inadequate organizational support. Nurses often having limited opportunities for continuing professional development.²⁸⁻²⁹ Rapid advancements in healthcare settings in form of technologies and changing community needs, also require nurses to adapt continuously to new systems and evidence-based practices. Limited training opportunities for nurse and resistance to change further affect competency enhancement among nurses. Therefore, Healthcare organizations must create a supportive environment that encourage nurses for lifelong adaptive learning strategies and there should also be a possibility for accessible training opportunities.

Future Directions:

Future competency enhancement initiatives for nurses should focus on innovative teaching-learning methods and techniques, digital learning techniques & methods, simulation-based educational activities and interprofessional education models. Artificial intelligence, telemedicine and virtual learning technologies including simulations are expected to play a vital role in nursing education and practices related competency development.³⁰⁻³¹

Research initiatives aimed at identifying effective competency development strategies and evaluating educational outcomes are also necessary for strengthening nursing education and practice. Additionally, healthcare organizations should prioritize competency-based evaluations, mentorship programs and structured professional development pathways to improve workforce preparedness and enhance patient care quality.

Conclusion:

Competency enhancement is essential for maintaining professional excellence in nursing, it also ensures safe, effective and delivery of patient-centred nursing care. Continuous learning, competency-based

education, simulation training, mentorship, reflective practice and interprofessional collaboration are key strategies for improving competencies among nurses. Healthcare organizations and educational institutions must work collaboratively to provide a supportive learning environments and ongoing accessible professional development opportunities. Strengthening nursing competencies not only improves healthcare outcomes and patient safety but also promotes professional growth, confidence and job satisfaction among nurses.

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