

The Roles and Qualities Required of a Case Manager

Case Management - part 3

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Case management is a method which aims for quality care and the continuity of services in our social context of efficiency and effectiveness. Significant organizational change underlies the concept. These changes have an effect not only on care delivery, but also on the people responsible for assuming them.

PROFESSIONAL VISIBILITY

The nursing profession still projects the image of the traditional role of care providers who faithfully execute the doctor's orders. Nurses are limited to a more conservative role in physical care, in medication delivery and in patient monitoring.

Being quite attached to their customs, nurses hesitate to break out of the mould and assume greater responsibilities or a more prestigious role. Are fear and shyness to blame? There is no definite answer. That being said, training for nurses is increasingly at the cutting edge. Training should encourage them to update their skills to the point that they can confidently assume more prestigious duties.

Definition: Case Management

A method which aims for the continuity of services and quality care among specifically identified clientele in a context of efficient, effective and humane resource management.

The above comment should in no way be interpreted as criticism. That is the role nurses have been taught to play for a long time. That role is still dignified and required by patients. Society also continues to maintain the romantic image of the nurse in the white

uniform bending over the patient.

It is not our intention to question this traditional role, but societal values are changing and technological innovations are being made. As such care requirements are also changing along with the organization of care delivery. The aim is obviously to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Case management is among the changes which enhance the role of the nurse.

This care delivery method has created two new, significant roles for nurses - that of pivot nurse and that of case manager. The task is demanding for both nurses offering care to patients in the front lines and for nurses working behind the scenes who supervise the overall care delivery process. There are many human and professional elements which go along with this role. The team dynamics are largely the result of the leadership, relational qualities, nursing competency and managerial competency of the coordinator.



SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS

There are three major elements to the coordination role of the case manager:

- 1) Managerial responsibilities regarding the patient pathway during an episode of care.
- 2) The coordination of the multidisciplinary team.
- 3) The clinical responsibilities involved in implementing a plan of intervention.

Role of the Case Manager

At the administrative level:

- To coordinate the care delivered to a group of patients;
- To facilitate communications between care providers and hierarchies;
- To oversee the follow-up of consultations and that they are linked to other services;
- To eliminate task and intervention duplication, to plan for care delivery, to implement the plans of care and to ensure their follow-up.

In practice, the case manager acts like a catalyst for the team because its various care providers, who belong to a variety of disciplines, need to be mobilized for a common purpose. The case manager is both the eyes and the ears of the patient, his caregivers and his loved ones. As such, she is a valuable source of information for all. The case manager welcomes the patient, develops a partnership with him, gathers relevant information from him and his family, assesses his

physical condition, identifies his support network, anticipates care requirements, makes plans for the necessary procedures and initiates them.

The assumption is that the case manager will contact all professionals involved in the plan of care (meetings or phone calls), provide them with information, consult them, bring them together in meetings and maintain warm and effective communications with them.

Her role is to oversee the evaluation and satisfaction of client needs as well as the achievement of anticipated clinical outcomes from pre-hospitalization to post-hospitalization. The case manager oversees that the patient receives appropriate care and services as outlined in the clinical pathway plan within the allotted time frame.

Aspects of Case Management

Case management:

- **Requires a complete and integrated services network.**
- **Takes the client in charge in his overall case without fragmenting care.**
- **Is focused on the person and his family.**
- **Is guided by specific objectives shared by all team members.**
- **Is managed using structured, systematic and pluridisciplinary clinical pathway plans.**

INTERACTIONS OF THE CASE MANAGER DURING AN EPISODE OF CARE IN CASE MANAGEMENT



Responsibility for client pathway in the system

In practice, the coordinator is responsible for supervising the clinical pathway of the patient in the health care system. The coordinator:

Welcomes the patient and his family and establishes effective communications with them.

- Identifies the health needs of the patient and the expectations of his family.
- Makes an assessment of the resources and support network at their disposal.
- Develops a clinical pathway plan with the multidisciplinary team.
- Brings the consultants together at the right time.
- Coordinates all tests, examinations, consultations and care according to the condition of the patient and to the clinical pathway plan.
- Makes sure that the tests and examinations are carried out within the best time possible or as scheduled.
- Seeks to ensure the continuity of care by avoiding fragmentation and duplication of services.
- Participates in the performance report and client and family satisfaction surveys.
- Makes or has others make the required preparations for the patient discharge.
- Supervises or provides education and information to the patient and his family.

Definition: Clinical Pathway Plan

↳ An intervention plan developed by a multidisciplinary team which is subdivided into well-defined stages over a clearly outlined continuum and which takes into consideration the pathologies normally encountered by patients included in the case management program.

↳ The plan provides for treatments, examinations and medications to be delivered at every stage or day of the planned period of treatment by job category.

Responsibilities of the coordinator of the multidisciplinary team

An essential role in the multidisciplinary team is that of the coordinator. The coordinator:

- Establishes communications with other team members, transmits the information required to them and invites them to attend team meetings.
- Contacts the consultants involved, issues reminders and follows up on the interventions to be implemented.
- Maintains relations among the consultants and departments involved in the follow-up.
- Facilitates the flow of information among the members of the multidisciplinary team.
- Plans multidisciplinary clinical meetings and assumes a leadership role in their conduct.
- Invites members to attend team meetings.
- Participates in the drafting of clinical reports.
- Participates in the preparation of performance reports regularly.
- Makes plans for the patient discharge with the multidisciplinary team.
- Identifies variances between the planned objectives and the actual clinical outcomes of the clinical pathway plan.
- Compiles the information about the objectives and resulting variances which prevented a particular case from fitting into the matrix, and develops statistics.
- Implements any required corrective measures to the clinical pathway plan with the multidisciplinary team.

Clinical obligations of nurses

The case management coordinator also has a role to play in the nursing team. The coordinator:

- Identifies the current and potential needs of the client with the nursing team and questions her coworkers about the required nursing diagnoses.
- Develops a plan of care with the nursing team while taking into account the overall clinical pathway plan.
- Writes or has others write the notes to the record.
- Identifies the education needs of the client and his family. Provides the information and education to the client and his family.
- Provides (depending on the job description) care to a group of persons.¹

Variance Analysis



Variance analysis helps to:

- ❖ Record the progress of the individual when he fails to conform to the clinical pathway plan;
- ❖ Identify, analyze, find the causes and define corrective measures for goals which have not been achieved;
- ❖ Carry out research and compile useful statistics.

¹ The work load of a case manager may vary by institution. In certain institutions the case manager may be responsible for coordination only while other nurses implement the plan of care, whereas in other institutions the case manager may be responsible for a reduced number of clients in addition to assuming the responsibility of coordinating the case management program.

- Encourage the nursing team to participate in the performance reports and to identify variances in the clinical pathway plan.

THE QUALITIES REQUIRED OF A CASE MANAGER

To effectively assume the role of case management coordinator, the nurse needs to have a certain number of qualities.

At the clinical level

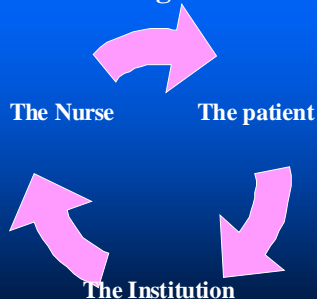
She must have sound clinical knowledge to identify the needs of clients and their families, to make relevant nursing diagnoses, and to define clinical objectives, to develop plans of care in accordance with the condition of the patient and the overall clinical pathway plan. The case manager must have both **adequate training and clinical experience** in her department or speciality in order to assume a leadership role.

She also needs a certain number of **pedagogical skills** in order to educate the patient and his family and to provide them with the information that they need to understand both the disease and its treatment. This role extends to coworkers and other professionals in the multidisciplinary team. The case manager must be able to effectively communicate information about the follow-up, its components, its requirements, quality of care assessment criteria, patient receptiveness criteria within the program, discharge criteria, and so on.²

Qualities of the Case Manager

- **Sound clinical training and background.**
- **Communication, negotiation and problem-solving skills.**
- **Ability to educate patients and other care providers.**
- **Dexterity.**
- **In-depth knowledge of ethics and strength of character required to voice dissidence when necessary.**

The Following Benefit from Case Management:



The case manager has a general perspective, unlike her fellow nurses. She must therefore act as a consultant for both them and the other professionals involved. This requires the case manager **to use her communication, negotiation and conflict resolution skills** and to be tactful in order to avoid creating rivalries and discontent when requesting the cooperation of others, when encouraging them to participate in the process, and when preparing a performance report about their concerted effort.

². Walthell, 1990, found in Michelle Nadon and Claire Thibault,(1993) Suivi systématique des clientèles. Expériences d'infirmières et recension des écrits. Montréal, O.I.I.Q.

The role of the case manager is both that of a negotiator and of an advocator responsible for ensuring that the best interests and rights of the client are upheld, for defending the rights of the client, and for ensuring that the services outlined in the clinical pathway plan are provided. The role of the case manager requires sound knowledge of the ethical dimensions of a given situation, the hospital services involved and the community resources available; it also a capacity for **self-affirmation** to justify her opinions and to voice her dissidence when needed.

The role of the case manager encompasses certain aspects which are rather thankless, such as convincing other professionals to accept her leadership.

At the multidisciplinary team level

The role of case manager is central to the team and requires certain personal abilities. The case manager must be effective at analyzing and summarizing in order to draw out the relevant and irrelevant aspects of the multidisciplinary team, of the patient's case and of his family. This quality is essential in order to develop clinical pathway plans, to gain a general perspective of the situation and to coordinate the care providers involved.

The case manager must have **strong problem-solving abilities** in order to solve organizational, relational or technical problems which may arise and to avoid variances to the plan throughout its anticipated duration.

The case manager shows an **aptitude for teamwork and a propensity for hosting meetings. Significant leadership and decision-making qualities** are at the centre of this role. The case manager must be able to assert her convictions, communicate effectively, and get others to adhere to and implement the case management guidelines.

The case manager is also required to show **investigative skills** in order to oversee, evaluate and correct the implementation of the clinical pathway plans, the quality of care being delivered, the final results, and the strengths and weaknesses of the system.

Finally, she must be able to **write clearly and effectively**. Depending on the system in place at the institution where she is working, the case manager must have working knowledge of the calculations used for case-mix groups and of the criteria used for risk management, cost-benefit analysis and quality of care assessments. She must also be able to compute statistics to highlight her findings.

CONCLUSION

When implemented, case management offers many benefits both to the patient and the institution. Case management also benefits nurses by shedding visibility on their roles and responsibilities and by requiring them to apply their skills and abilities. This nursing delivery method only enhances the role and potential of nurses.

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