

EDITORIAL

Enhancing Nursing Practice

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In this edition of the News Journal, we invite you to reflect on enhancing your nursing practice. The pursuit of enhanced nursing practice looks different for novice nurses than it does for more experienced professionals. Factors like role changes and engagement in professional development are additional factors that influence career-enhancing strategies. While newly licensed nurses may focus on developing confidence, technical competence, and time-management skills, experienced nurses often concentrate on leadership, mentorship, specialization, and healthcare innovation. Grasping these differences allows organizations to better support nurses at every career stage.

Nurses play a critical role in promoting health, preventing illness, supporting recovery, and advocating for patients across diverse healthcare settings (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2025). As healthcare systems continue to evolve in response to technological advances, demographic changes, and increasing patient complexity, nurses must continuously enhance their professional practice to meet growing demands. This growth requires development of clinical competence, expanding knowledge, pursuing professional growth, and engaging in reflective practice to improve patient outcomes and healthcare experiences (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2011).

Nurses are caregivers, leaders, educators, patient advocates, researchers, and decision-makers who collectively influence healthcare policy and organizational change. Consequently, strengthening nursing practice is essential not only for professional advancement but also

for improving healthcare systems and community well-being.

Defining Enhanced Practice

Enhancing nursing practice is not a single intervention; it is a continuous process of strengthening clinical judgment, communication, and systems awareness. The most effective approaches combine individual skill development with improvements in the care environment. Ultimately, this growth refers to the continuous process of improving the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies required for effective nursing care. It encompasses lifelong learning, evidence-based practice, ethical decision-making, leadership development, and personal reflection (Chadwick et al., 2025). Elevating practice also involves embracing innovation, maintaining professional accountability, and responding effectively to the cultural and social needs of diverse patient populations.

Enhancing Skills in Nursing Practice

Effective nursing practice requires a combination of technical, interpersonal, and critical-thinking abilities. These skills enable nurses to respond appropriately to patient needs and collaborate efficiently with the broader healthcare team. While clinical competence remains central to nursing practice, communication skills are equally important to support effective interactions with patients, families, and interdisciplinary healthcare professionals. Furthermore, nurses must demonstrate strong critical-thinking, problem-solving, and evidence-based-practice abilities to analyze

patient information and make safe clinical decisions. Leadership and emotional intelligence are increasingly important in modern healthcare environments as nurses coordinate care, guide team members, advocate for patients, and remain resilient during stressful situations. Technological competence is another essential skill because nurses must adapt to electronic health records, telehealth systems, and digital monitoring technologies (Potter et al., 2021).

The focus of skill development frequently differs according to nursing experience. Novice nurses typically prioritize mastering clinical procedures, work to improve communication confidence, and applying established clinical guidelines and protocols. Experienced nurses, however, often refine advanced assessment skills; participate in research projects, policy revisions, or quality-improvement initiatives; or engage in mentoring and coaching newer staff, bridging the gap between research and practice and improving organizational practice standards. Continuous skill development strengthens nursing performance and improves patient safety and satisfaction (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2021).

Professional Growth

Nurses have long recognized the value of professional development activities and specialty certifications as two methods for broadening clinical expertise. Certifications validate specialized knowledge and demonstrate a nurse's deep commitment to excellence and professional standards (American Nurses Credentialing Center, 2026). Nurses who earn specialty



credentials gain increased professional credibility, greater clinical competence, and stronger patient-care outcomes, alongside greater career opportunities. Furthermore, certification also encourages nurses to remain updated on evidence-based practices and healthcare advancements (ANA, 2022). Over time experienced nurses may choose to pursue advanced certifications to transition into leadership, education, administration, or advanced practice roles.

This ongoing professional development is a lifelong process that supports career advancement and continuous learning. Nurses engage in these opportunities through continuing education programs, workshops, seminars, advanced academic degrees, research participation, as well as through mentorship, coaching, and membership in professional organizations. Because healthcare environments constantly evolve, ongoing education is essential for maintaining competence and adapting to new standards of care (Brunt & Russell, 2022).

Professional growth strategies evolve according to career stage. Newly licensed nurses benefit from residency programs, preceptorships, and structured clinical guidance that ease the transition into practice. Mid-career nurses may focus on specialization, graduate education, or leadership training. Finally, experienced nurses frequently pursue executive leadership positions, academic teaching opportunities, or mentoring roles that allow them to share their expertise with newly licensed and mid-career nurses.

Changing positions within the nursing profession can contribute significantly to professional growth. Nurses may transition between departments, healthcare settings, or advanced practice roles to gain broader experience and develop new competencies. These career transitions can include moving from medical-surgical nursing to intensive care; shifting from bedside care to nurse

education or administration; transitioning into nurse practitioner or clinical specialist roles; or exploring community and public health nursing. Such changes allow nurses to expand their perspectives, strengthen adaptability, and discover areas of passion and expertise (Benner, 1984). Although these transitions may present initial challenges, they frequently lead to professional satisfaction and career fulfillment.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a deliberate process of examining experiences to improve future nursing actions and decision-making. It encourages nurses to evaluate their performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, and apply lessons learned to future situations (Zarrin et al., 2023). This process is valuable for nurses at every level of experience and in every professional role; student nurses, staff nurses, nurse managers, educators, and advanced practitioners all benefit from reflection (Patel & Metersky, 2022). Through reflective practice, nurses become more aware of their communication styles, emotional responses, and clinical decision-making processes, contributing to professional maturity and accountability (Zarrin et al., 2023).

The reflective process may differ according to longevity in nursing. Novice nurses often reflect on technical skills, confidence, and communication challenges. Experienced nurses may focus more on leadership effectiveness, ethical dilemmas, interdisciplinary collaboration, and mentoring responsibilities.

Reflective practice provides many benefits to the nurse and the organization. It improves critical thinking, clinical judgment, self-awareness, communication, teamwork, emotional resilience, and stress management. It also reduces the likelihood of repeated mistakes while supporting safer and higher-quality patient care. In addition, reflection

strengthens evidence-based practice by encouraging nurses to evaluate outcomes and seek improved approaches to care (Bolg et al., 2020).

Nurses can apply reflective practice through journaling, debriefing sessions, peer discussions, reflective frameworks, and evaluation of patient-care experiences. For example, after a challenging patient interaction, a nurse may analyze what occurred, identify effective and ineffective responses, and determine strategies for future improvement. This process promotes continuous learning and professional accountability (Zarrin et al., 2023). Experienced nurses may use reflective practice to mentor newer nurses, improve team communication, and guide organizational quality-improvement efforts (Bolg et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Enhancing nursing practice is essential for delivering safe, effective, and compassionate healthcare. Through skill development, evidence-based practice, certification, leadership, professional growth, technological competence, career transitions, and reflective practice, nurses can strengthen their practice and adapt to the evolving demands of healthcare systems. Continuous improvement not only benefits nurses professionally but also lead to better patient outcomes, stronger healthcare teams, and higher standards of care (IOM, 2011). Ultimately, healthcare institutions must invest in nurse education, mentorship, and supportive policies to ensure nurses can continue to thrive in increasingly complex healthcare environments. ■

References online:
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