

## The role of nurse managers during the new coronavirus pandemic

*O papel dos gerentes de enfermagem durante a pandemia do novo coronavírus*

*El papel de los gerentes de enfermería durante la pandemia del nuevo coronavirus*

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The pandemic caused by the new Coronavirus of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which started in Wuhan, China in late December 2019, has spread rapidly across the world, infecting more than 23 million people in the past eight months and deeply impacting the health systems of several countries.<sup>1</sup> Nurses, who play pivotal roles in achieving the healthcare goals in health facilities as the essential link in the process of providing healthcare, are also on the frontlines in the fight against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).<sup>2</sup> In these chaotic, stressful, and uncertain times, nurse managers, who constantly receive new information about the disease and its prevention, work hard to make correct decisions while leading the nursing team.<sup>3</sup>

A systematic review about the experiences of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that they have been significantly affected by the unpreparedness of health institutions and nursing departments in the response to critical situations such as the current one.<sup>4</sup> In order for all preventive and curative health facilities and nursing services departments to respond effectively to the pandemic, it is recommended that thorough preparations be made and an effective communication network be established in accordance with internal, regional, and national plans.<sup>3,5</sup> It would be useful to make preparations over existing services and scenarios that can be quickly adapted to the new situation in epidemics and other crises and to lead the team using contingency management strategies.<sup>6</sup> There are three important elements that should be included in these plans: (1) expanding the care capacity and number of beds, (2) providing a sufficient number of competent nursing staff, and (3) ensuring the supply of materials and equipment for both patients and healthcare workers.<sup>5-6</sup>

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It is recommended that nurse managers adopt employee-oriented leadership approaches so that nurses can perform their duties at the highest level possible in the fight against the pandemic. Teamwork is a key concept here; it is important that managers share accurate and up-to-date information with all team members, be present and accessible, and show interest in what is happening in their locality. It is also important to speed up all decision-making and implementation processes, from providing resources to quality improvement processes.<sup>3</sup>

Although there is much to celebrate in nursing and leadership in the process of combating COVID-19, it has been observed that there are some gaps in the leadership field.<sup>7</sup> Discreet and strong leaders/managers are necessary to ensure the motivation, courage, morale, and needs of the nurses working on the frontlines during the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> Even if there are improvements in healthcare and technologies that effectively fight against the virus, it is not possible to achieve real success without the leadership and compassionate touch of nurses.

Though nursing has an increasingly recognized role in shaping healthcare in several countries, nurses need to strive to be more decisive in changing/improving health systems. Opportunities must be provided for nurses to develop their leadership skills. The fact that 2020 has been declared the “Year of the Nurse and the Midwife” by the World Health Organization and that nursing is in focus due to the COVID-19 pandemic create a great opportunity to train nurses to be leaders, now and into the future.

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