I.M. Spivak, E.G. Biryukova

Scientific Center of Children's Health, Moscow, Russian Federation

Communicative competence improvement of senior nurses as the basis of health promoting environment formation at a pediatric inpatient hospital

Author affiliation:

Spivak Igor' Maratovich, MD, senior research scientist at the laboratory of special psychology and remedial teaching of the Scientific Center of Children's Health (Federal State Budgetary Institution)

Address: 2/1 Lomonosovskii Av., 119991, **tel.:** +7 (499) 340-01-04 **Article received:** 12.02.2014. **Accepted for publication:** 24.02.2014.

This article is dedicated to dependence of psychological and somatic well-being of sick children on the quality of social environment at an inpatient hospital. The authors emphasize the crucial role of the nurse's personality in the formation of a favorable unit environment regarding the child's psychological condition. They cite data of a study of risk factors reducing quality of labor activity of the nursing staff. The authors describe psychological aspects of teaching professional communication skills to senior nurses in order to form health promoting environment at a pediatric inpatient hospital. They evaluate efficiency of communicative competence improvement of senior nurses.

Keywords: children's health, health promoting environment, communicative skills, stress factors, medical personnel training.

The child's psychological condition during the hospital stay depends on a range of factors. On the one hand, the fact of being admitted to an inpatient hospital causes emotional stress due to the change of material and social environment and the regular lifestyle. On the other hand, the child's psychological condition is affected by age, individual peculiarities of perceiving and emotionally responding to stressful situations (pain, restraint of movement, fears, uncertain near future, disease severity, therapy type etc.) and social environment at the inpatient hospital.

The quality of social environment at a medical institution as a factor of impact on the child's psychological condition is being understudied in scientific medicine and psychology [1, 2].

The traditional subjects of therapeutic process are a doctor, a nurse and a patient. Only medical specialists may voluntarily influence the formation of a comfortable social environment. As long as paramedical personnel actively interact with a patient by organizing and providing nursing, it is the nurse's personality that acquires a special role in this process.

Orientation of a medical care rendering specialist's personality forms in the process of upbringing based on the deontological principles, which formed in the ancient times [3]. Humanistic orientation of a nurse's personality has been the main criterion of professional selection of medical personnel, especially for working at a children's medical institution. However, medical specialists require additional professional skills, which would maintain proper quality of the social interaction of the medical personnel with the patient, as the medicine shifts towards the biopsychosocial health model, which takes the patient's psychological condition, physical health and social environment into consideration [4-9].

As academician A.A. Baranov mentioned in his interview to I. Krasnopolskaya, a nurse "must find approach to all children and their parents" and "must be a high-class professional [10]. Thus, nurse's professionally important qualities are becoming an object of scientific interest.

The study is aimed at examining the factors affecting quality of paramedical personnel's professional activity in the process of social interaction with an ill child and his/her family. The study involved 45 participants – head nurses employed at the Scientific Center of Children's

Health (Federal State Budgetary Institution).

The study was performed in 3 stages:

- stage 1: detection of the factors affecting pediatric inpatient hospital's social environment quality;
- stage 2: development of an educational program on the basis of the detected factors and teaching professional communication skills to head nurses;
- stage 3: assessment of results of the communicative competence development of head nurses.

The study involved use of the following methods: polling, experiment-forming content analysis and scaling.

On study stage 1 we performed an anonymous polling of head nurses using specially developed questionnaires containing 6 (3 open and 3 closed) questions.

A range of questions was aimed at revealing specific details of interpersonal relations. Thus, the respondents could give one or several answers to question "What kind of professional relationship is the most difficult for you?"

Other questionnaire items were aimed at revealing factors of stress at work. In particular, question "Which professional situations cause emotional strain / stress in you?" was an open question. Answers to open questions were later processed using content analysis.

Study stage 1 results. Discussion

Study of specific details of interpersonal relations of paramedical personnel's professional activity demonstrated that all nurses have difficulties in the sphere of professional communication. 56% of communicative difficulties arise in relationships with ill children's families, 44% are associated with interpersonal relations with colleagues. The respondents did not mention any conflict relations with children themselves.

Study of the situations arising in the professional sphere and affecting psychological condition of the nursing staff demonstrated that all nurses experience emotional strain due to a range of factors.

Content analysis of respondents' answers allowed distributing the mentioned stress factors into three clusters of deficient needs:

- 1) insufficient mental and physical resources;
- 2) insufficient communicative skills;
- 3) insufficient work time.

Cluster 1 involved such respondents' answers as "I get tired of everyday problems", "I don't sleep enough", "I am exhausted".

Cluster 2 involved such answers as "It is difficult to communicate with rude parents", "I can't convince the patient", "I don't want any conflict situations" etc.

Cluster 3 involved such answers as "I've got many responsibilities", "I don't have enough time to do job", "I don't have enough time to communicate with colleagues" etc.

According to the clusters of needs, the obtained results were distributed as follows: in 67% of nurses emotional strain is due to insufficient mental and physical resources; in 50% of cases stress is connected with the employees' problems in the sphere of professional communication (insufficient communicative skills); 28% of nurses explain their unstable emotional state with insufficient work time. Emotional strain of paramedical personnel is caused by a combination of several factors. Insufficient communicative skills and psychophysical personality resources are observed in 43% of the emotionally strained nurses; insufficient communicative skills and time – in 32%; insufficient time and psychophysical resources – in 25% of cases.

Analysis of the results revealed the following.

- 1. All the polled head nurses indicate nursing staff difficulties in the sphere of professional communication.
- 2. The factors reducing quality of professional activity of nurses are insufficient mental and physical resources, insufficient communicative skills and insufficient work time.

3. According to the polled nurses, nursing staff requires additional professional education regarding efficient communication skills.

Thus, everyday practice of communicating with ill children and their parents results in the nurses' need in expanding professional experience and optimizing emotional state and actualizes their need in interdisciplinary knowledge. Head nurses champion this knowledge among the nursing staff.

On study stage 2 we developed an educational program on the basis of the detected factors and taught professional communication skills to head nurses with the help of a pedagogue-psychologist.

Practical course of professional communication training was introduced into the program of the thematic advanced training cycle for head nurses organized and conducted at the Scientific Center of Children's Health (Federal State Budgetary Institution).

Let us consider psychological aspects of the training in more detail.

The training of head nurses was primarily based on the *principle of democratic communication*. A pedagogue-psychologist would address experience and knowledge of the trainees, build up partnership relationships with them, attract them to joint activity and collaborative research and maintain regular feedback with colleagues. The training subjects were selected according to the real requests of head nurses (the principle of the maximum training relevance to the real life) [6, 11].

Special attention was given to the process of *pedagogical communication*. We considered it as a model of efficient trainer's interaction with trainees. Models of behavior in a situation of pedagogical communication demonstrated by a pedagogue-psychologist observed by the trainees could have been mastered by the trainees and used in the course of professional communication with colleagues and patients.

Among psychological features of the "optimal communication" (by A.A. Leontyev), we distinguished between subject-subject basis, dialog and positive tone of the trainer's interaction with the trainees [12].

A pedagogue-psychologist realized the subject-subject basis of interpersonal relations with such qualities as empathy, amicability and respect for the trainees' opinions [13-15].

Subjectivity of head nurses was determined by employing peculiarities of their personalities in the training course. Scientific data indicate that adult trainees have common characteristics [16]. Thus, a head nurse as a trainee sees herself as a more independent and self-controlling person; she accumulates an increasingly wide life (lifestyle, professional, social) experience; she is willing to learn, because it is her aspiration to solve vitally important issues and achieve specific goals with the help of educational activity; she strives for immediate implementation of the acquired experience; her educational activity is to a considerable degree conditioned by time, spatial, professional, lifestyle and social factors (conditions).

Dialogical form of training allowed maintaining activity of the audience, controlling their attention and emotionally involving them into the educational process.

Interpersonal relationships based on partnership, amicability and respect for opinions of the others built up by a pedagogue-psychologist contributed to safety and psychological comfort of all the trainees and, thus, created opportunities for positive perception and fast mastering of the educational material.

Thus, the training of head nurses was based on the common psychological principles characteristic of trainings for adult audience.

Results of study stage 2: we determined program content and psychological aspects of teaching professional communication skills to head nurses.

The training should consist of knowledge, abilities and skills facilitating implementation of the nursing staff's control over the situation of communication with children and their parents and optimization of nurses' mental and time resources.

Educational process should be democratic and relevant to the real life and include subject-subject, dialogical, constructive and positive bases of a pedagogue's relationship with trainees.

Scaling was used to assess training results on study **stage 3**. Head nurses were asked to assess two parameters from 0 to 5. The first parameter concerned degree of their satisfaction with the knowledge acquired in the course of training; "0" – "completely dissatisfied", "5" – "completely satisfied". The second parameter characterized the level of a head nurse's emotional comfort in the course of studies; "0" – "complete discomfort", "5" – "complete emotional comfort". We deem assessment of training results of the course audience objective on the basis of subjectivity peculiarities of head nurses. There is scientific proof that adult trainees assess the obtained knowledge on the basis of their practical requests [16, 17]. We considered the level of emotional comfort of the audience in the process of training as an indirect indicator of training efficacy, which, if high, indicates emotional acceptance of the training content and motivational readiness of the trainees to use the acquired knowledge in their professional sphere [1, 14, 15].

Results of study stage 2: high level of respondents' satisfaction with the acquired knowledge (4.7 on the average). Head nurses assessed level of their emotional comfort in the course of training as high (4.8 on the average).

The obtained results confirm quality of the training based on the principles of democratic communication and knowledge relevance to the real life regarding improvement of communicative competence of head nurses.

We may claim that high level of communicative competence of head nurses contributes to the development of behavior repertoire regarding situations of communication with ill children and their parents, optimization of the paramedical personnel's emotional state and forms solid ground of the pediatric inpatient hospital's health-saving environment.

REFERENCES

- 1. Valentik Yu.V., Darenskii I.D. *Psikhoterapevticheskii rezhim narkologicheskogo statsionara. Sbornik trudov SO GNTsPZ AMN RF* [Psychotherapeutic Regimen at a Narcological Inpatient Hospital. Collected Works of the Siberian Division of the State Scientific Center of Mental Health of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Russian Federation]. Tomsk, 1992. pp. 81–90.
- 2. Kabanov M.M., Lichko A.E., Smirnov V.M. *Metody psikhologicheskoi diagnostiki i korrektsii v klinike* [Methods of Psychological Diagnostics and Correction Employed at Clinics]. Leningrad, Meditsina, 1983. 312 p.
- 3. Troitskaya L.A., Romanova M.A., Grigor'eva I.A. etc. *Praktika pediatra Pediatrician's practice*. 2013; 12: 48–61.
- 4. Biryukova E.G. *Pediatricheskaya farmakologiya Pediatric pharmacology*. 2012; 9(2): 156–158.
- 5. Biryukova E.G., Varfolomeeva E.Yu. *Pediatricheskaya farmakologiya Pediatric pharmacology*. 2012; 9(4): 103–105.
- 6. Pendleton D., Scowfield T., Tate P. etc. *Vrach i bol'noi: iskusstvo obshcheniya* [A doctor and a Patient: the Art of Communication]. Moscow, Praktika, 2005. 150 p.
- 7. Tvorogova N.D. *Glavvrach Chief Physician*. 2003; 6: 32–36.
- 8. Hardi R.I. *Vrach, sestra, bol'noi: psikhologiya raboty s bol'nymi* [A doctor, a Nurse, a Patient: Psychology of Work with Patients]. Budapest, Akademiya, 1974. 286 p.
- 9. Khegaturova A.K., Slepushenko I.O., Lipskii B.K. etc. *Psikhologiya obshcheniya meditsinskogo personala v lechebno-profilakticheskikh uchrezhdeniyakh. Pod obshch. red. A. K. Khegaturovoi. Prilozhe nie k zhurnalu «Sestrinskoe delo». Vyp. 2 (10)* [Psychology of Medical Personnel's Communication at Medical Preventive Facilities. Edited by A.K. Khegaturova. Supplement to journal "Nursing". Issue 2 (10)]. Moscow, Meditsinskii vestnik, 2003.
- 10. Krasnopol'skaya I. Rossiiskaya gazeta Russian newspaper. 2014; 34(6306): 12.
- 11. Zimnyaya I.A. *Pedagogicheskaya psikhologiya. Uchebnik dlya vuzov* [Pedagogical Psychology. University Textbook]. Moscow, Logos, 1999. 384 p.

- 12. Leont'ev A.A. *Pedagogicheskoe obshchenie* [Pedagogical Communication]. Moscow, Nal'chik, El'-Fa, 1996.
- 13. Bodalev A.A. *Psikhologiya obshcheniya. Izbrannye psikhologicheskie trudy* [Psychology of Ccommunication. Selected Works on Psychology]. Moscow, Izd-vo Moskovskogo psikhologosotsial'nogo instituta; Voronezh, MODEK, 2002.
- 14. Glozman Zh.M. *Obshchenie i zdorov'e lichnosti* [Communication and Personal Health]. Moscow, Akademiya, 2002.
- 15. Kudryavaya N.V., Ukolova E.M., Smirnova N.B. etc. *Pedagogika v meditsine: ucheb. posobie. Pod red. N.V. Kudryavoi* [Pedagogics in Medicine: Educational Guide. Edited by N.V. Kudryavaya]. Moscow, Akademiya, 2006.
- 16. Zmeev S.I. *Andragogika: osnovy teorii, istorii i tekhnologii obucheniya vzroslykh* [Andragogy: Adult Education Theory, History and Technology Basics]. Moscow, PER SE, 2007. 272 p.
- 17. Sandreeva S.Kh. *Psikhologo-pedagogicheskie osobennosti podgotovki sester obshchei vrachebnoi praktiki. Pervyi Vserossiiskii s"ezd vrachei obshchei praktiki. Sbornik tezisov i statei* [Psychological-pedagogical Peculiarities of Training General Practice Nurses. The First Russian National Congress of General Practitioners. Collection of Abstracts and Articles]. Samara, 2000. pp. 239–241