

**Michael Tejada Make up assignment:**  
**The Psychological safety in nursing**

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Psychological safety is very important in nursing. It provides a foundation for care to the patients and allows a nurse to feel safe at work. If a nurse does not feel safe at work then how would they provide care to a patient properly? They wouldn't be able to provide care and feel safe at work, because they would be in their heads thinking about their safety. If a nurse does not feel safe at work they will not take risks when caring for a patient. These nurses would not be able to think on their own to utilize critical thinking because the constant thought of getting disciplined from higher levels of the healthcare team would be in their head.

Psychological safety is a blanket that helps keep a healthcare team working properly. It is that constant thinking and awareness of whether it is safe to take risks at work and if risks are taken will the team be covered and protected by the leadership. It is particularly important inside health teams who need to work together to deliver patient care within a highly complex, multi level hospital environment. This is important because it is important for nurses to feel safe while caring for patients. Even though the benefit of a culture with psychological safety is ideal and needed for a properly functioning healthcare team, there is still that fear and low psychological safety that still exists within healthcare. There is a need to develop and implement interventions to improve psychological safety within these teams. A good example in today's healthcare environment is the Covid -19 pandemic that happened in 2020. This has highlighted the importance of psychological safety within healthcare teams. Many nurses were left feeling burnt out from being overworked, betrayed, and stranded because of covid 19. Another big thing that played into this was the fact that nurses were getting fired and put on administrative leave because of their refusal to get the covid 19 vaccine. This had many nurses that would feel like they weren't safe at work. If nurses were scared during this scary time in our nation, then who

would be the light for these sick patients who are scared of a new virus that is killing millions world wide?

From approximately March through October , thousands of nurses across the nation experienced reduced work hours or were cut all together. On the contrary, big city areas of the nation such as New York City, suffered from a lack of nurses. This is because the big cities were the hardest hit during Covid due to population and close contact with each other. New York City had to have the U.S. Navy ships at a port to help with hospital bed space. Hospitals were over capacity and there were no more beds. Nurses were being worked the hardest of their careers, working 12 hour shifts for days on end, and yet some were laid off or placed on administrative leave during this new virus that had the world in shambles. This was the aftermath of the nationwide quarantine in late March, which shut down all unnecessary businesses such as gyms, restaurants, and other social businesses that have people in close contact with each other.

Furthermore most of the healthcare in the nation was put on hold unless it was an absolute emergency. This includes all clinic visits for routine checkups and elective surgeries which includes any surgery that is performed before the situation becomes a medical emergency causing surgical centers to close. People were going in to get medical care only when it was an emergency. This shifted the hospital's focus to units that focused on covid 19. This caused a major deficit in other units that did not specialize in covid care. This is where the layoffs started happening. Hospital funds were going all to the covid floors while on the other hand the other units were suffering. Many nurses had to start doing travel nursing just to have a job. This wasn't an option for most nurses. Many nurses have families and have to stay home to provide or care for their children. This resulted in many nurses experiencing financial and emotional distress.

Covid single handedly put nurse psychological safety at a huge risk. Now nurses are at a risk of being overworked or being laid off. Another big issue that covid 19 brought up was the fact some nurses were not getting the vaccine and they were not being protected by their employers and instead they were being laid off. These hospitals caved into the political debates and did not have their employees' backs. Hundreds of nurses got laid off and fired because of their refusal to get the vaccine. These nurses were not protected and their psychological safety was not there. These nurses did not have the blanket of physiological safety to be able to perform care for patients properly. How can regular people that are getting covid and need these nurses help to get better, be able to rely on a nurse that does not feel safe doing their job due to lack of the safety net not being there for these nurses mental health?

Psychological safety helps nurses feel safe when using voice and learning techniques in the hospital. Being able to speak up and voice opinions are needed to keep a healthcare team working together like a team. Feeling psychologically safe can allow team members to participate in active roles and be productive in the team. Being productive can include simple tasks such as asking questions, calling out a mistake and suggesting the need for improvement in certain areas. Psychological safety also makes nurses feel comfortable when reaching out to leadership when seeking advice, such as seeking help or feedback. This tool of being able to express opinions freely and openly are important to a healthcare team's ability to manage the tasks that are at hand, which normally involve providing quality patient care. This is also helpful because the nursing field rapidly evolves. Thousands of new nurses enter the field each week and the field evolves rapidly with new knowledge and practice with rapidly evolving knowledge and practice as well as their ability to learn from failure. This is why it is important to teach that psychological safety is important when managing a healthcare team. It will allow the team to

flow smoother and work in cohesion to accomplish the goal of patient care and safety. The first step in that though is to make nurses feel psychologically safe.

On the contrary if there is no psychological safety this will inhibit team members from speaking up and cause them to stay in a shell and avoid issues and remain silent. Even though nurses speak up often that does not mean that these nurses are not hiding opinions because of the lack of a solid foundation of a psychological safety net.

Before the pandemic there was another major event that shook the foundation of psychological safety everywhere in the medical field. This event took place in 2017 in Tennessee. A Registered Nurse named Radonda Vaught committed a medication error. Vaught made a medication error when she gave her patient an injection of vecuronium, which is a muscle relaxant. She was supposed to give versed, which is a sedative, however she made the mistake of giving the muscle relaxant which starts with a “v” as well. This was a grave mistake because she killed her patient, who was a 70 year old woman. This event troubled the medical field everywhere because there was also a physician at the time who was acquitted of murder. He killed multiple murders of his patients. The hospital where Radonda worked at, did not have her back at all during the whole trial. The hospital she worked at did not follow the guidelines for reporting the medication error and they did not report the medication error at all. Redonda wanted to report it and go about things the right way. The hospital lied and told the medical examiner that she died of “natural causes”. Vaught also admitted to the mistake but she plead not guilty. She claimed the hospital had flawed systems and technical issues when performing medication administration.

Thousands of nurses across the nation saw this trial, and they saw how the hospital did not have Radonda's back. How would this affect a nurse's ability to trust that their leadership would have their backs? It affects it a lot, it inhibits the speaking up aspect and the trust that is established in the blanket that psychological safety provides in the healthcare team. Nurses see how Radonda's leadership abandoned her and do not feel safe at work. It could affect how a nurse feels giving meds. They might feel like they are constantly being watched and pressured. This can cause even more fatal medication administration effects down the line. The nurse may also feel alone and that there is no "team". This is all negative effects of not having psychological safety, and it directly affects patient care.

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