

School Nurse Shadowing

The school nurse at Salt Fork South Elementary/Junior High School is responsible for approximately 370 students in total. Her responsibilities include caring for sick and injured students when they come to see her, managing students' medications and medical conditions during school hours, managing student physicals, sports physicals, and immunizations, and checking AED machines monthly. Today, the school nurse was taking calls in the morning for sick students who could not attend. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, any student who has COVID symptoms that has a sibling or parent who attends or works in the school district must also be sent home, so the nurse was looking up who had siblings and calling their teachers/schools to tell them to go back home. The district nurses and superintendent of schools coordinate with each other to contact trace the origins of a COVID exposure and who else in the district was exposed, as well as quarantine dates. These tasks take up most of the nurse's time in the morning between giving routine medications, care, and seeing sick and injured children. Later on in the day, the students were having their roller skating unit PE class, so we sat in on the classes between tasks and monitored for injuries. We watched the students skate and kept an eye on those that fell to make sure they did not display signs of distress and got back up after falling. Only one student was injured during PE class, and it was a very mild injury that was treated with an ice pack.

As a whole, the school has a problem with low-income students. These students tend to have parents with a high school education or lower, which results in low health literacy. Not all students are getting the preventative care they need, which can result in more severe problems later on down the line. A major health risk for the student population is low health literacy later in life. A nursing diagnosis for this health risk is deficient knowledge related to low health literacy as evidenced by the inability to identify common signs and symptoms of acute illness (Health-Conditions, 2020). A nurse could educate families by sending out printed/email handouts to parents and older children on common OTC medications, side effects, and signs/symptoms that would warrant a call to the provider/ED. A nurse could also teach a class to families on preventative care and why it is important. A nurse could advocate for more accessible preventative healthcare for children, or even start a program to give a basic head-to-toe assessment while children are at school.

This clinical site related to this course because the school nurse is one of the first steps the general public interacts with when it comes to public health. The nurse deals with the school as a whole as well as individual students, and she has to coordinate with the public health department in the event of an epidemic or health crisis. She has to be aware of public health news and changes so she can change her plan of care accordingly. School nurses expand access to healthcare to many children who otherwise would not have access (Lowrey, 2018). The school nurse also provides education to teachers and parents regarding more severe health issues with students. For example, the nurse I shadowed had a student with a history of seizures, and each year has to notify each teacher of the signs/symptoms of his seizures, how to prevent injury during a seizure, and how to handle the other children in the classroom. During this clinical experience, I learned that school nurses do much more than I realize and I will definitely advocate for more full-time nurses in schools. I will also make sure to emphasize education to my patients and provide resources to help increase their health literacy.

Reference

Health-Conditions. (2020). *Approved NANDA Nursing Diagnosis List 2018-2020*.

Health-Conditions.

Lowrey, K. M. (2018). *What School Nurses Really Do: Realizing the Power of School Nursing in Public Health*. Network for Public Health Law.

<https://www.networkforphl.org/news-insights/what-school-nurses-really-do-realizing-the-power-of-school-nursing-in-public-health/>