

Philosophy of Nursing

Patrick A. Russell

Ellmer School of Nursing, Old Dominion University

NURS 401: Introduction of Professional Development

Dr. Holly Tenaglia

March 30, 2025

Philosophy of Nursing

The purpose of this paper is to develop and begin to define my personal nursing philosophy, as I work toward earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. I wholeheartedly believe that nursing is more than just a profession; it is a fundamental aspect of healthcare that bridges the gap between clinical science and the human experience. My philosophy is rooted in the values of integrity, teamwork, relationships, and empathy, all of which contribute to patient-centered care.

Additionally, I firmly believe in the ethical principles of autonomy and beneficence as guiding forces in nursing practice (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019). Seeking support for my philosophy, I found Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring to be very relatable, as it emphasizes the importance of meaningful relationships and holistic care in nursing (Watson, 2008).

Definition of Nursing

Nursing is an essential component of healthcare that extends beyond performing medical tasks; it involves advocating for patients, providing education, and offering emotional support. I like to think that nurses serve as mediators between the clinical world and the patient experience, inevitably ensuring that care is individualized rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Through empathy and understanding, nurses are able to tailor the care they provide to meet the unique needs of each patient, while simultaneously fostering trust and a sense of security. Nursing is not merely about treating illnesses but about promoting overall well-being through compassionate and evidence-based care. Preventative care is a particularly important aspect of nursing, as it empowers patients to take proactive steps in maintaining their health and reducing the risk of illness. Educating patients about preventative measures supports this autonomy and aligns with the principle of beneficence by promoting long-term well-being (Gillon, 1994).

The Purpose of Nursing

The primary purpose of nursing is to promote health, prevent illness, and facilitate healing while ensuring the highest quality of life for patients. To me, nursing is about empowering patients to take an active role in their own healthcare decisions, fostering autonomy when possible, and ensuring that the patient's dignity is preserved throughout their medical journey. The way nurses deliver care is just as important as the care itself – offering kindness, patience, and respect can significantly impact a patient's overall experience and outcomes. These elements shine most in the relationships nurses have the opportunity to cultivate in their practice, ultimately serving as a great foundation for effective and compassionate care.

Nursing Relationships

I settled on three key nursing relationships that shape my overall philosophy: the nurse-patient relationship, the nurse-family relationship, and the nurse-self relationship. The nurse-patient relationship is the cornerstone of care, where trust, communication, and advocacy play a crucial role. The nurse-family relationship acknowledges the impact of healthcare on loved ones, as family members often play just as much of a role in the patient's recovery as the patient themselves, if not more. Lastly, I believe that the nurse-self relationship is critical in sustaining a long and fulfilling nursing career; maintaining personal well-being, integrity, and self-care enables nurses to provide compassionate and effective care without experiencing burnout – as the ever-wise Ru Paul often says: “If you can't love yourself, how'n the hell you gonna love somebody else?”. Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring highlights these relationships by emphasizing the importance of genuine connections and holistic care (Watson, 2008).

Additionally, strong teamwork and a shared nursing philosophy can help nursing teams navigate

ethical dilemmas, particularly when balancing autonomy and beneficence in patient care decisions (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019).

Moral and Ethical Principles in Nursing

Two fundamental ethical principles that I want to incorporate into my nursing philosophy are autonomy and beneficence. Patient autonomy is such a valuable principle in nursing, as it ensures that patients are active participants in their care, when possible. By providing education and presenting choices, nurses empower their patients to make informed decisions about their health. Beneficence aims to ensure that nursing actions are always in the best interest of the patient through the commitment to doing good and prioritizing the well-being of others (Gillon, 1994). Finding a balance between these two principles can be complex – determining when to honor a patient’s potentially harmful decision versus when to intervene for their well-being is a frequent ethical challenge in nursing. Through collaboration with colleagues and adherence to ethical guidelines, nurses can work toward solutions that respect patient autonomy while still advocating for their best interests.

Conclusion and Reflection

My personal nursing philosophy is centered on patient-centered care, autonomy, and the belief that nursing is both an art and a science. Integrity, teamwork, and relationships are essential for effective care, while empathy enhances the quality of interactions with patients. My philosophy aligns with Jean Watson’s Theory of Human Caring, highlighting the importance of holistic and compassionate care. As I transition from my role as a patient care technician to a registered nurse, I look forward to gaining more responsibility and having a more direct impact on patient outcomes. My current role has provided invaluable exposure to the nursing profession,

reinforcing my commitment to delivering compassionate and ethical care. As I move forward in my nursing education and career, I will aim to uphold these values and strive to make a meaningful impact in the lives of my patients. I look forward to continuing to refine my nursing philosophy, ensuring that I remain dedicated to patient-centered, empathetic, and high-quality care.

References

Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (2019). *Principles of biomedical ethics* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Gillon, R. (1994). Medical ethics: Four principles plus attention to scope. *BMJ*, 309(6948), 184–188. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.309.6948.184>

Watson, J. (2008). *Nursing: The philosophy and science of caring* (Rev. ed.). University Press of Colorado.