



# Medical-Surgical Nursing at a Glance

Ian Peate



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Nursing**  
**at a Glance**

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# Medical-Surgical Nursing at a Glance

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**WILEY** Blackwell

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# Preface



**M**edical-Surgical Nursing at a Glance is the ideal revision and consolidation book for undergraduate nurses and other healthcare workers. The text breaks down complex aspects of medical and surgical care in an accessible and inviting way against the backdrop of continually changing surroundings.

There have and there will continue to be many changes that will have an impact on the care that nurses offer patients in medical and surgical care settings. Key trends that may emerge over the next ten years or so are related to the socioeconomic and political environments, the health and care sectors, regulation concerning health and social care, the nursing and midwifery sectors as well as education and training provision for nurses and healthcare assistants. These changes will affect the ways in which nurses deliver care in the various health and social care settings. Rapid technological progress has the potential to alter the dynamic between the nurse and the patient. Telehealth is being increasingly used in providing healthcare along with the implementation of the electronic patient record.

Despite these changes, caring, kindness and compassion remain central to the role of the medical or surgical nurse. The use of an evidence base to offer care that is safe and effective is now a prerequisite of any healthcare provision.

This is a user-friendly, accessible aid for study and revision for preregistration nursing students. There are 77 chapters with 4 parts divided into medical and surgical nursing. The text adopts a concise and simple approach and is accompanied by detailed illustrations. The chapters are presented in bite sizes,

in a double-page spread with colour diagrams, tables and line drawings. It is a practical text that addresses issues from a number of perspectives including anatomy and physiology, where relevant, and associated pathophysiology.

This book has been written to meet the needs of those working in the dynamic and ever-changing medical and surgical setting. The key aim of the book is to orientate and guide readers through the important and salient issues that they may face when providing safe and effective medical and surgical care. This text is offered at an introductory level, capturing all that the healthcare practitioner needs to know during their initial education and beyond. The approach used provides a better understanding of the issues related to medical and surgical nursing, walking the reader through the key issues and the significant points. The text reminds readers that there are physical and psychological issues that must be given careful consideration as well as recognising patient safety and the legal and ethical issues that must be taken into account when providing contemporary and up-to-date care.

The text builds on the strengths of existing 'At a Glance' titles already published; it is more accessible and less intimidating than other revision aids related to medical and surgical nursing. The At a Glance approach incorporates images and text, appealing to a number of learning styles.

I have enjoyed writing this text and I hope that you enjoy reading it.

*Ian Peate*



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# About the companion website



Don't forget to visit the companion website for this book:



[www.ataglanceseries.com/nursing/medsurg](http://www.ataglanceseries.com/nursing/medsurg)

There you will find valuable material designed to enhance your learning, including interactive multiple choice questions.

Scan this QR code to visit the companion website.





# Nursing practice



## Part 1

### Chapters

- 1 What is nursing? 2
- 2 The 6 Cs 4
- 3 Accountability and responsibility 6
- 4 Risk and safety 8
- 5 Patient-centred care 10
- 6 Team working 12

## 1

# What is Nursing?

Figure 1.1 Three definitions of nursing

## International Council of Nursing

Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles

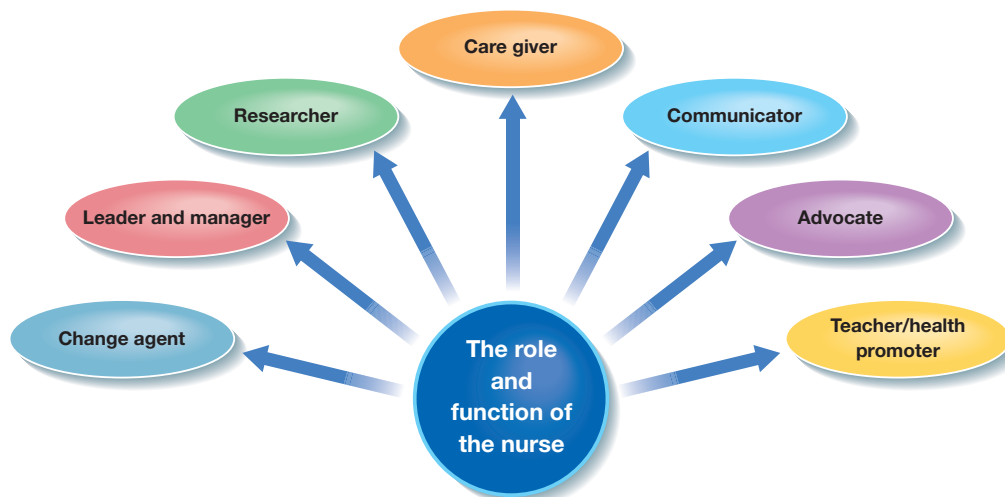
## The American Nurses Association

Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations

## Royal College of Nursing

The use of clinical judgment in the provision of care to enable people to improve, maintain, or recover health, to cope with health problems, and to achieve the best possible quality of life, whatever their disease or disability, until death

Figure 1.2 Some elements associated with the role of the nurse



To care safely and effectively for a person, the nurse must understand what nursing is, the role of the nurse and the function of the nurse. Attempting to do this, however, brings with it challenges.

## Defining nursing

The International Council of Nursing suggests that nursing encompasses the autonomous and collaborative care of people of all ages, families, groups and communities, be these sick or well and in all settings. Nurses in undertaking their work promote health, prevent illness and care for those who are ill or disabled and people who are dying. Central to the nurse's role is advocacy, the promotion of a safe environment, research, participating in shaping health policy in patient and health systems management and education.

The American Nurses Association explains that nursing is concerned with the protection, promotion and optimisation of health and ability, preventing illness and injury, and relief from suffering. Nurses do this through diagnosis and treatment of the human response; nurses also act as advocates caring for individuals, families, communities and populations.

The Royal College of Nursing (2003: [www.rcn.org.uk/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/604038/Defining\\_Nursing\\_Web.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/___data/assets/pdf_file/0003/604038/Defining_Nursing_Web.pdf)) professes that nursing can be described as the provision of care that is underpinned by clinical judgement, enabling individuals to improve or maintain health or recover from illness. Nurses assist people to cope with health problems; they contribute to enhancing the quality of life regardless of the person's disease or disability until their death.

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of three definitions of nursing.

The fact that there are so many definitions of nursing (not to mention what it is that nurses do) would suggest that the term is elusive and is difficult if not impossible to define. When working in a variety of contexts, for example, a hospital ward, person's own home or general practice, the role and function of the nurse will change in response to the context in which care is being offered. However, there are still central components of the nurse's role that will never change, for example, offering support, providing information and making decisions that are in the best interests of the person. What must be remembered, however, is that different kinds of definitions are needed for different purposes.

Nursing is a dynamic activity and as such it is constantly developing to meet the needs of people. Nursing and what nurses do take account of new knowledge from a variety of disciplines, for example, the social (psychology, social anthropology, sociology) and physical (chemistry, biology, physics) sciences. No one definition of nursing will ever suffice due to the complex nature of the human being. Trying to define nursing could be too limiting but without a definition, it would be difficult to formulate policy, specify services and develop educational curricula and therefore some specification is required.

## The function of the nurse

Just as it is a challenge to attempt to define nursing, it is also a challenge to describe the role and function of the nurse. Figure 1.2 provides some elements that are associated with the role of the nurse.

### Care giver

This aspect of the role has traditionally included those activities that assist the person from a physical and psychological

perspective while preserving the person's dignity, providing comfort and respecting the person. The notion of care giving embodies physical, psychosocial, developmental, cultural and spiritual aspects; this is often referred to as a holistic approach.

### Communicator

The most important aspect of the role of the nurse concerns communication which is central to all nursing roles. The nurse communicates with the person, the person's family (as well as those who support the person), a variety of health professionals and others in the community. Communication takes many forms, non-verbal (i.e. body language, the ability to actively listen, and written communication) and verbal. The quality of a nurse's communication (efficacy) is an important element in nursing care.

### Advocate

The role of an advocate is to protect the person; when required, the nurse represents the needs of the person, assisting the person in exercising their rights and helping them speak up for themselves.

### Teacher/health promoter

The nurse as teacher/health promoter helps people to learn about their health and what they need to do to restore or maintain their health. Assessing the person's learning needs and readiness to learn, the nurse working with the person sets learning goals, performing teaching strategies and measuring learning.

### Change agent

The nurse acts as a change agent when assisting others, helping them to make modifications in their own behaviour. Nurses also work with others to make changes in the healthcare system.

### Leader and manager

The nurse as leader influences others to work together to accomplish specific goals. This is often carried out at different levels: individual person, family, groups of people, colleagues or the community. The nurse manages the nursing care of individuals, families and communities, appropriately delegating activities to others, supervising and evaluating their performance.

### Researcher

Nurses use and conduct research to enhance care. As researchers and consumers of research, they must be aware of the process and language of research.

## The changing role of the nurse

As the role of the nurse continues to expand, there are a number of new aspects developing alongside the function of the nurse.

Consultant nurses and clinical nurse specialists have usually completed a doctorate or Master's degree in a specialty and have a considerable range of clinical expertise in that specialty. These nurses provide expert care to individuals, participate in educating healthcare professionals and undertake research.

The nurse practitioner is skilled at making nursing assessments, performing examinations, counselling, teaching and treating minor and self-limiting illness.

A nurse educator teaches in clinical and educational settings, teaches theoretical knowledge and clinical skills and conducts research.

# 2

## The 6 Cs

Figure 2.1 The 6Cs of nursing



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## Compassion in practice

Care is at the centre of all that nurses do. Being a nurse brings with it a number of privileges; it is an extraordinary role. What the nurse does every day can have a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of the people we are privileged to provide care for. Nurses are central in helping people keep themselves independent, healthy and well for longer. Helping people to recover from illness and supporting them in living with illness from a medical and surgical perspective is a part of this.

The provision of care and comfort when a person's life comes to an end, the compassion and humanity that nurses show are the hallmarks of our care and support system. Nurses provide care for everyone, regardless of their background, their gender or their age, from the beginning of a new life to the end of a life. This care is provided to people in their own homes, in their local general practice, in the community, in residential and care homes, in hospices and in hospitals. Nurses support people and their families often when they may be at their most vulnerable.

The Chief Nursing Officer for England and the Director of Nursing at the Department of Health have drawn up a 3-year vision and strategy for nursing, midwifery and care staff – Compassion in Practice – introduced in December 2012. The vision is underpinned by six fundamental values: care, compassion, competence, communication, courage and commitment (Figure 2.1).

## The 6 Cs

The Chief Nursing Officer's vision acknowledges that the context for healthcare and support is changing and always in a state of flux. In particular, people are living longer, there are a greater number of older patients and people who require and will continue to require support, there are a growing number of people with multiple and complex needs as well as people with higher expectations of what healthcare and support can and should provide. Offering people health and care support and services requires the nurse to work with people in a new partnership, engaging with people when they make choices about their health and care.

No one of the 6 Cs is more important than the other five; each one (the values and behaviours) carries equal weight. The 6 Cs instinctively focus on ensuring that the person being cared for is at the heart of the care they receive.

## Care

Care is central to the work of our core business and that of our organisations and the care that nurses deliver can help the individual person and improve the health of the whole community. Caring defines nurses and nursing. Those who receive care should be able to expect it to be right for them, always, throughout every stage of their life.

## Compassion

This concept concerns how care is given through relationships that are rooted in empathy, respect and dignity. Compassion can

also be seen as intelligent kindness and is crucial to how people perceive the care they receive.

## Competence

All those who provide care must have the capability and capacity to understand a person's health and social needs along with the expertise, clinical and technical understanding to deliver care that is effective and treatment that is safe and based on research and evidence.

## Communication

Nurses are at the heart of the communication process, ensuring that care and support planning is in place based on the identified needs of the person being cared for.

This concept is key to effective caring relationships and successful team work. In order for 'no decision about me without me' to become a reality, listening is just as important as what we say and do. Communication is the key to a good workplace with benefits for those in our care and staff alike.

## Courage

Being courageous empowers the nurse to do the right thing for the people we offer care to, to make it known when we have concerns and to mobilise our personal strength and imagination to innovate and welcome new ways of working.

## Commitment

Commitment is a cornerstone of what nurses do and what people expect. Nurses are committed to improving the care and experience of the people they care for, in order to meet the health, care and support challenges that will lie ahead.

## Areas of action

Along with the 6 Cs are six areas of action.

- 1 Helping people to stay independent, maximising well-being and improving health.
- 2 Working with people to provide a positive experience of care.
- 3 Delivering high-quality care.
- 4 Measuring its impact.
- 5 Building and strengthening leadership.
- 6 Ensuring we have the right staff, with the right skills in the right place

Person-centred care in the NHS requires the nurse and other healthcare workers to look at all the elements of care a person experiences – from the clinical care they receive to how the person is greeted by a cleaner or receptionist, or how easy it is to find their way round a hospital or health centre. Often, it is the little things that make a big difference to how people feel about the way their care needs are met. Together with the 6 Cs and the six areas of action, nurses can work towards the ultimate aim of ensuring that the patient is truly at the heart of all that is done.