

## NURSING MANAGEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE: CHALLENGES AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES IN WARTIME CONDITIONS

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**Introduction.** In the current wartime conditions in Ukraine, the healthcare system has undergone profound transformations, necessitating enhanced efficiency in the management of medical institutions, particularly in the field of nursing. Management in nursing practice has acquired special significance, as nurses form the backbone of the healthcare system – ensuring continuity of patient care, coordination of interdisciplinary teams, and the adaptation of medical processes to crisis situations.

**The aim of study** – to analyze the distinctive features of nursing management in modern Ukraine, to define its conceptual foundations, and to identify the essential professional and personal qualities that enable nurses to perform effectively as managers and leaders in a healthcare system operating under the pressures of war and reconstruction.

**The main part.** Nursing management is defined as a scientifically grounded activity aimed at the effective organization of nursing staff, the rational use of available resources, and the improvement of healthcare quality. In modern healthcare, a nurse performs not only traditional caregiving duties but also acts as a manager, coordinator, consultant, and mentor for patients and colleagues. The key professional competencies of a nurse manager include strategic thinking, decision-making ability, leadership, psychological resilience, ethical conduct, and readiness to act under uncertainty. Under wartime conditions, the need for rapid decision-making, crisis management, organization of nursing care in resource-limited settings, and the provision of moral and psychological support to the wounded, civilians, and medical personnel has become paramount. The modern model of nursing envisions the nurse as a highly educated specialist capable not only of performing clinical duties but also of effectively managing the nursing process, implementing evidence-based medical standards, and fostering the professional growth of the healthcare team.

**Conclusions.** The professional role of the nurse in Ukraine today extends far beyond traditional patient care, encompassing managerial, educational, and psychological functions. In wartime, the nurse's role as a manager becomes especially critical, as nurses ensure the stability, flexibility, and effectiveness of healthcare delivery. The development of managerial competencies among nurses is a strategic priority for the advancement of Ukrainian healthcare — aimed at improving the quality of nursing care, strengthening human resources, and reinforcing the resilience of the healthcare system in times of crisis.

**Keywords:** nursing management; professional competence; managerial activity; nursing process; crisis management; healthcare system; war in Ukraine.

## МЕНЕДЖМЕНТ У СФЕРІ МЕДСЕСТРИНСТВА В СУЧАСНІЙ УКРАЇНІ: ВИКЛИКИ ТА ПРОФЕСІЙНІ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ ЗА УМОВ ВІЙНИ

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**Вступ.** За сучасних умов війни в Україні система охорони здоров'я зазнала глибоких трансформацій, що зумовили потребу в підвищенні ефективності управління медичними закладами, зокрема у сфері медсестринства. Менеджмент у медсестринській діяльності набуває особливого значення, адже саме медичні сестри становлять основу функціонування системи охорони здоров'я, забезпечуючи безперервність догляду за пацієнтами, координацію міждисциплінарних команд та адаптацію медичних процесів до кризових обставин.

**Мета роботи** – проаналізувати особливості управління сестринською справою в сучасній Україні, визначити його концептуальні основи і важливі професійні та особистісні якості, що дозволяють медичним сестрам ефективно виконувати обов'язки менеджерів і лідерів у системі охорони здоров'я, що працює під тиском війни та відбудови.

**Основна частина.** Менеджмент у сфері медсестринства визначається як науково обґрунтована діяльність, спрямована на ефективну організацію роботи сестринського персоналу, раціональне використання ресурсів та підвищення якості медичних послуг. На сьогодні медична сестра не лише виконує традиційні функції догляду, але також є менеджером, координатором, консультантом і наставником для пацієнтів та колег. До основних професійних компетенцій медсестри-менеджера належать стратегічне мислення, здатність приймати управлінські рішення, лідерські навички, психологічна стійкість, етичність і готовність діяти за умов невизначеності. Під час війни на першому місці – потреба у швидкому прийнятті рішень, кризовому управлінні, організації медсестринського догляду при обмеженні ресурсів, а також у забезпеченні морально-психологічної підтримки поранених, цивільного населення та медичного персоналу. Сучасна модель медсестринства передбачає, що медична сестра – це фахівець з вищою освітою, який здатен не лише виконувати клінічні завдання, а й ефективно керувати сестринським процесом, упроваджувати стандарти доказової медицини та сприяти професійному розвитку команди.

**Висновки.** Професійна діяльність медичної сестри в Україні на сьогодні виходить за межі традиційного догляду й охоплює управлінські, освітні та психологічні функції. За умов війни роль медичної сестри як менеджера значно посилюється, адже саме вона забезпечує стабільність, гнучкість і ефективність системи медичної допомоги. Формування управлінських компетенцій у медсестер є стратегічним напрямом розвитку української медицини, спрямованим на підвищення якості медсестринського догляду, посилення кадрового потенціалу та зміцнення системи охорони здоров'я за кризових умов.

**Ключові слова:** менеджмент у медсестринстві; професійна компетентність; управлінська діяльність; медсестринський процес; кризове управління; система охорони здоров'я; війна в Україні.

**Introduction.** The early decades of the 21st century have become a time of profound transformation for Ukraine, marked not only by ongoing social and economic reforms but also by the unprecedented challenges brought about by the full-scale war. The nation continues its transition from a post-Soviet, centralized administrative model toward democratic governance, market-oriented economic systems, and a civil society rooted in individual initiative and responsibility. At the same time, the war has reshaped every sphere of public life, demanding resilience, adaptability, and innovation from all citizens, particularly those working in the healthcare sector.

In these complex and turbulent circumstances, the concept of management has acquired renewed significance. Once introduced in Ukraine in the late 20th century as a symbol of modernization and reform, management today serves as a strategic tool for survival, coordination, and effective decision-making amid crisis. It extends beyond its traditional association with business and administration to encompass vital domains such as public health, education, and, most notably, nursing practice.

In the context of wartime Ukraine, nursing management has evolved into a key component of the healthcare system's sustainability and responsiveness. Nurses are no longer viewed merely as executors of medical orders but as autonomous professionals, organizers, and leaders who ensure the continuity of care in extreme conditions, manage limited resources,

and provide psychological and humanitarian support to both patients and displaced populations.

The aim of study is to analyze the distinctive features of nursing management in modern Ukraine, to define its conceptual foundations, and to identify the essential professional and personal qualities that enable nurses to perform effectively as managers and leaders in a healthcare system operating under the pressures of war and reconstruction.

**The main part.** At present, the concept of management is interpreted in several complementary ways:

- as a specific type of professional activity aimed at achieving defined objectives through the rational use of material and human resources;
- as a collective term referring to individuals performing managerial functions and the organizational structures responsible for coordination and administration;
- as a system of principles, methods, tools, and forms of leadership and coordination that ensure the effective performance of an organization in pursuit of its strategic goals.

Contemporary trends in nursing management across European healthcare systems are determined by a combination of socio-economic and demographic factors, such as declining birth rates and the increasing proportion of elderly populations. These challenges are particularly acute in Ukraine, where systemic reforms are being implemented across all sectors of the national

economy, including healthcare. The ongoing war has further intensified these transformations, creating unprecedented pressure on medical institutions and their personnel while simultaneously accelerating the modernization of healthcare management practices.

The importance of nursing as an integral component of the healthcare system is underscored by a number of World Health Organization (WHO) policy documents, particularly the Health 21: Health for All in the 21st Century framework for the European Region. This strategic guideline calls upon states undergoing health sector reform to adopt a systematic, goal-oriented approach to the reorganization of nursing education and practice. The objective is to ensure that nursing professionals possess not only clinical competence but also managerial, organizational, and leadership skills necessary for the effective operation of modern healthcare systems – especially under the exceptional circumstances of wartime and post-war recovery in Ukraine [1].

The European Conference on Nursing (Vienna, 1988) emphasized that “without nurses, there is no future.” This statement continues to hold profound relevance in the twenty-first century, underscoring the indispensable role of nursing within healthcare systems worldwide.

In its contemporary interpretation, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines nursing not only in terms of its place and objectives within the healthcare structure but also by clearly delineating its broad functional responsibilities. According to this perspective, nursing is an integral component of the healthcare system aimed at addressing both individual and public health challenges under continuously changing environmental and social conditions [2].

Nursing encompasses a wide range of professional activities, including health promotion, disease prevention, and psychosocial support for individuals with physical and/or mental illnesses, as well as for persons with disabilities across all age groups. Moreover, it integrates physical, intellectual, and social dimensions of human life, recognizing how these factors influence health, disease, disability, and mortality.

In the context of Ukraine's ongoing war and humanitarian crisis, this comprehensive understanding of nursing acquires even greater significance. Nurses have become key frontline actors in maintaining the resilience of the healthcare system—providing emergency care, psychological support, and

rehabilitation to both military personnel and civilians. The holistic WHO approach to nursing thus serves as a vital framework for strengthening Ukraine's health sector amid wartime challenges and in the broader context of post-war recovery and healthcare reform [3].

The presented evidence highlights the increasing importance of nursing services and the nurse as a key healthcare professional who serves as the first point of contact with the patient, their family, and their community – providing care in hospitals, at home, and throughout the entire course of life. Under these circumstances, the need for high-quality professional education and training of nurses becomes particularly significant.

According to the International Council of Nurses (ICN), a nurse is a person who has completed a basic program of nursing education, possesses adequate qualifications, and is authorized to provide nursing care within their country in order to promote health, prevent illness, and care for the sick. This definition, endorsed by the WHO Expert Committee on Nursing (1987), remains relevant and adaptable to the needs of modern healthcare systems [4]. A nurse represents a synthesis of high moral integrity, broad intellectual competence, and professional mastery.

Recognizing the critical role of nurses in patient care, many nations today emphasize the preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative dimensions of nursing practice. This expanded scope underscores the nurse's responsibility not only for supporting physicians but also for direct participation in health restoration and medical-social rehabilitation.

In the context of Ukraine's wartime healthcare system, the autonomy and interdependence of nursing and medical practice have become even more apparent. Nurses act as collaborative partners with physicians and, equally importantly, as advocates and educators for patients, who are no longer passive recipients of care but active participants in managing their own health and recovery. This partnership model strengthens the resilience and adaptability of healthcare delivery amid the ongoing challenges of war and post-war reconstruction [5].

An integrated approach to the composition, competence, authority, and responsibility of healthcare professionals in the treatment and prevention of diseases necessitates overcoming the traditional stereotype of the nurse as merely an executor of physicians' orders. In modern healthcare, the

nurse is a full-fledged member of the medical team, functioning as both an assistant and collaborator to the physician. The role of a nurse should not be confined to the mechanical fulfilment of prescriptions; rather, it encompasses active participation in decision-making, patient assessment, and care coordination.

While the quality of a physician's work is often evaluated by measurable outcomes, the contribution of nurses to diagnostic and therapeutic processes is more complex to quantify, particularly in the absence of direct empirical indicators. Nevertheless, the nurse's influence on patient outcomes, comfort, and recovery remains undeniable and requires recognition at both institutional and policy levels. In the context of Ukraine's current socio-economic and political realities, intensified by the ongoing war, the need for conceptual transformation in nursing education and professional training has become especially urgent. This includes revising both pre-service and postgraduate training programs for mid-level healthcare personnel to align with contemporary global standards.

Priority should be given to the implementation of innovative medical, educational, and methodological technologies, integrating domestic and international best practices in the field of healthcare management. Achieving these objectives will make it possible to train a new generation of nurses – professionally competent, ethically grounded, and capable of leadership – thereby enhancing the prestige and social significance of the nursing profession and ensuring high-quality, patient-centered nursing care, even under the demanding conditions of wartime and post-war healthcare recovery.

In 2005, Ukraine approved a national program for nursing reform, which marked a significant step toward aligning the country's nursing education and practice with international standards. Under this program, the educational framework "Sectoral Standard for Master's-Level Nursing Education" was developed, and several specialized institutions were established to implement it. These included the Zhytomyr Institute of Nursing, as well as faculties for master's training at medical universities in Chernivtsi and Kharkiv, and the Institute of Nursing as a structural unit of the I. Horbachevskyy Ternopil National Medical University.

According to the educational and qualification characteristics defined for the nursing master's degree, a Master of Nursing is recognized as a researcher, expected to pursue scientific inquiry, defend

academic theses, and obtain advanced degrees. Such professionals are also prepared to teach nursing disciplines, lead nursing education programs, and manage nursing processes within healthcare institutions.

The Ukrainian Master's curriculum in Nursing was designed using the academic models of Canada and the United States, with certain components adapted from successful European programs. This synthesis ensures that Ukrainian nursing education incorporates the best international practices while maintaining national relevance [6].

As a result, Ukrainian nurses now have expanded opportunities to engage in academic teaching, scientific research, and evidence-based management of healthcare quality. These reforms are gradually elevating Ukrainian nursing to the level of leading European and global standards, promoting the development of a scientifically grounded, autonomous, and respected nursing profession capable of meeting the complex healthcare challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including those intensified by the ongoing war and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

A nurse is a unique individual who independently performs a wide range of specific duties at a high professional level. It is the nurse, with her knowledge, skills, and experience, who functionally ensures appropriate medical care for patients [7].

The modern model of nursing assumes that a nurse is a specialist with professional education, who shares the philosophy of nursing, has the right to work, and creatively implements the nursing process. Perfect mastery of manipulation techniques and the full theoretical scope of knowledge will ensure the proper execution of the doctor's prescriptions, as well as the implementation and realization of all stages of the nursing process to meet the patient's needs.

A nurse must confidently assume responsibility for the results of nursing interventions and approach her work with broad, holistic, and socially aware thinking. Professional nursing practice should be grounded in universal human values, empathy, humanistic principles, and spiritual maturity, integrated with comprehensive professional training. A nurse should also possess the essential qualities that enable her to function effectively as a skilled and successful manager.

There are essential qualities of a nurse functioning as an organizational manager, categorized into four main groups: professional and business, administrative and

organizational, socio-psychological, and moral qualities [8].

Professional and business qualities emphasize advanced expertise, strategic thinking, creativity, decision-making capacity, professional growth, authority, risk-taking ability, and competence in crisis management. These attributes enable a nurse to perform managerial functions effectively and to innovate within healthcare settings.

Administrative and organizational qualities focus on operational efficiency, flexibility in management style, staff motivation, task completion, consistency, self-monitoring, team-building, delegation, and time management. These skills ensure that nursing teams' function cohesively and that resources and workflows are optimized.

Socio-psychological qualities highlight leadership abilities, psychological competence, emotional regulation, self-confidence, stress resilience, collegiality, tolerance, communication, and persuasive skills. They are crucial for managing interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and maintaining a positive work environment in high-pressure healthcare contexts.

Moral qualities encompass patriotism, civic responsibility, ethical conduct, integrity, humaneness, and benevolence. These values underpin the professional identity of the nurse, ensuring that managerial activities align with ethical standards, patient-centered care, and social accountability.

Collectively, these qualities define the multidimensional role of a nurse-manager as a professional capable of integrating clinical expertise, leadership, organizational management, and ethical responsibility in contemporary healthcare systems.

The primary technological process of nursing care, which should be the focus of quality management, is the nursing process itself, understood as a scientifically grounded professional activity of nursing personnel. A process-oriented approach to managing the quality of nursing care allows for the development of evidence-based, practically applicable protocols and standards of care at all stages of the nursing process; it enables objective evaluation of the professional activities of nurses; planning of resources and costs associated with nursing care; objective assessment of nurses' professionalism and identification of gaps in their training; conducting scientific research; and creating a system of managerial activities for nursing staff based on standardization, principles of evidence-based medicine, and economic feasibility [9].

One method for optimizing the organization of nursing care is the nursing process, which is grounded in scientific principles and provides a clear sequence of nurse actions to achieve professional goals and objectives. By objectively assessing the patient's condition, identifying problems, establishing a nursing diagnosis, planning nursing interventions, and coordinating them with the patient and their family, the nurse implements the care plan, evaluates the outcomes, compares them with expected results, and, if necessary, adjusts the care provided.

Quality control is carried out by the head nurse and senior nurses of the departments, including daily observation and monitoring to ensure that all planned activities are implemented according to schedule and that nurses adhere to professional principles of practice.

A manager is a highly qualified specialist possessing specific knowledge and skills in modern management and computer technologies, endowed with sufficiently broad authority to engage in independent managerial activities [10].

The implementation of educational technologies that allow freedom of choice contributes to the development of professional readiness, self-directed correction, and creative application of skills and competencies. This, in turn, ensures the ongoing professional and creative growth of the nurse, as well as the socialization of their personality, preparing them to become a nurse-manager responsible for organizing nursing staff.

Managerial competencies are essential for the professional and pedagogical activities of nurses in teaching patients and their family's self-care and mutual care practices. These competencies help determine the relevance of the educational content, its significance for the patient, and create positive motivation for its assimilation. While setting educational goals for lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and practical training in patient education and self- and mutual-care techniques, the nurse must also consider developmental objectives aimed at fostering important personal qualities in the patient and their family, ensuring effective cooperation with the nurse.

**Conclusions.** Today, the readiness of a nurse for managerial and leadership activities is assessed based on their level of professional development and competencies. In the current context of Ukraine, including the ongoing armed conflict and its impact on



healthcare systems, a nurse is expected to: effectively organize educational and training activities for patients and their families, clearly defining goals, functions, and the content of each stage of instruction, while adapting to the challenges of healthcare delivery under crisis conditions; determine appropriate methods for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of patient and family education, in accordance with contemporary standards of healthcare quality and safety; consider the effectiveness of modern educational tools and approaches, including digital platforms, telemedicine, and remote learning technologies, to ensure continued access to vital health information even under restricted physical contact; create optimal learning and methodological conditions for the development of patients' and families' self-care and mutual-care skills, particularly in situations involving displacement, emergency evacuation, or care in temporary medical facilities; implement interdisciplinary integration

by combining knowledge from hygiene, anatomy, physiology, medical psychology, ethics and deontology, public health, family nursing, rehabilitation, and nursing management to provide comprehensive patient education; develop instructional materials and organize independent learning activities for patients and families, using scientific and popular resources adapted to the current crisis context; simulate professional scenarios through theoretical discussions, role-playing, and practical exercises to train patients and families in critical self- and mutual-care skills; assess patients' health status, identify learning and care needs, and plan educational interventions within the framework of the nursing process; conduct structured teaching sessions on self- and mutual-care, and accurately maintain all relevant nursing, medical, and educational documentation, ensuring accountability and continuity of care under crisis conditions.

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