Emancipatory Knowing-Quality Nursing Care & Leadership

Barb Henry

University of Cincinnati
Emancipatory Knowing involves critical analysis of the status quo and leading the way to practice change (Chinn & Kramer, 2008). Though all ways of knowing provide a foundation for advanced practice, emancipatory knowing is most important to quality care and leadership in the nursing profession.

Florence Nightingale built the foundation for empiric, ethical, personal, and aesthetic knowing in nursing (Chinn & Kramer, 2008). Her emancipatory knowledge helped improve sanitary conditions, healthcare for soldiers, and establish schools of nursing (Nightingale, 1969).

Nursing leaders who followed: Sanger, Wald, Dock, Taylor, Walking Bear Yellowtail, Staupers, and Thoms possessed emancipatory knowledge (Chinn & Kramer, 2008). Because of these leaders, the underserved of the time: women, children and families, Native Americans, and African Americans received equal access to healthcare and respect, a battle still fought by current nursing leaders.

Emancipatory knowing is necessary to provide adequate healthcare services for Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans who are expected to exceed the high post traumatic stress disorder, suicide, and addiction statistics of Vietnam era veterans (TransWorldNews, 2009). Nurses like Ruth Malone, PhD, RN, use emancipatory knowledge to battle big tobacco companies and assist Americans with smoking cessation to reduce healthcare costs and chronic illness (Shwarz, 2004).

A case from this authors practice illustrates why emancipatory knowing is most important. A patient with paranoid schizophrenia stable on a long acting injectable antipsychotic medication was denied the medication by a managed care administrator due to cost. The author provided clinical data documenting multiple hospitalizations and incarcerations due to noncompliance with oral medications in previous years. Despite the data, the appeal was denied.
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Oral medications were prescribed despite ethical and empirical knowledge that this was not the right course of action (Chinn and Kramer, 2008). The patient was eventually admitted for inpatient psychiatric treatment after an incarceration for menacing acts committed during a psychotic state. The author notified the mental health board and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (2010) of the problem. The managed care group is no longer an Ohio Medicaid provider due to similar incidents reported by other providers and patients. This type of experiential learning (Benner, 1982) increases emancipatory knowledge.

Emancipatory knowing builds on all four Carper model ways of knowing (Zander, 2000). Novice, advanced beginner, and competent nurses possess empiric and ethical knowing, but lack the personal and aesthetic knowing seen in proficient and expert nurses capable of holistic decision making and emancipatory knowing (Benner, 1982). Education and experiential learning provide opportunities to develop proficiency in recognizing patterns, similarity, common sense understanding, skilled know how, sense of salience, and deliberative rationality required for complex healthcare and emancipatory knowing (Benner, 1987).

According to Schultz & Meleis, nursing epistemology is: “the study of knowledge shared among the members of the discipline, the patterns of knowing and knowledge that develops from them and the criteria for accepting knowledge claims” (1988). Understanding ways of knowing that make nursing unique from medicine and other professions is an important theoretical framework for advanced practice (Chinn & Kramer, 2008).
References


