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Nurturing Leadership: A Decade-Long Journey from Novice to Nurse Manager in General Practice Nursing

Introduction:

In the dynamic landscape of healthcare, the transition from novice practitioner to seasoned leader represents a multifaceted journey characterised by growth, challenges, and transformational experiences. Within general practice nursing, this journey unfolds against diverse patient needs, technological advancements, and evolving organisational priorities. This commentary explores one nurse's decade-long journey from trainee Practice Nurse to Nurse Manager, reflecting on the profound impact of her experiences on professional growth and leadership development.

From Novice to Nurse Manager: A Reflective Journey:

The narrative of my journey commences with the exhilarating moment of entering the bustling environment of a general practice as a newly qualified nurse. I embarked on what would become the most transformative chapter of my professional life. As a Practice Nurse, I found myself immersed in the complexities of patient care, each interaction a canvas upon which I could paint a picture of compassion and healing. I delved deeper into the daily challenges of healthcare delivery, eager to learn and grow with each passing day.

Starting with my student days every encounter with a patient was a lesson in empathy, every procedure was an opportunity to enhance my clinical abilities. I embraced the responsibility entrusted to me with open arms, recognising that each moment spent at the bedside was a chance to make a significant impact on someone's life. As I navigated the multitude of care plans and treatment plans, I was captivated by the broader landscape of primary care.

I became increasingly engaged in the inner workings of the practice, actively participating in discussions about improving patient outcomes and reducing workflows. Whether it was brainstorming ways to improve nurse clinic efficiency or to call for resources to improve patient experience, I saw myself not just as a nurse, but as someone who could bring about positive change within the health system. I recognised the pivotal role of primary care in shaping our communities' health and well-being, and I was determined to be involved with innovation and progress.

As I laid the foundation for my future leadership journey, I felt grateful for the wisdom and experience of those around me as a result. My colleagues became more than just teammates; they were mentors, confidants, and sources of inspiration for my journey to growth and self-discovery. Working alongside them, I found the courage to step outside my comfort zone, embrace new learning and development opportunities, and cultivate the resilience needed to thrive in the ever-evolving healthcare landscape. I am grateful for the experiences that transformed me into the nurse and leader I am today. Every step of the journey, from the uncertainty of my initial day to the clarity of purpose that now guides me, has been a testament to the transformative power of passion, perseverance, and unwavering dedication to the art and science of nursing.

Ascending the Ranks:

As the years progressed, so did my journey within the practice hierarchy, each step forward a testament to my growing confidence and evolving abilities. From my initial role as a Senior Practice Nurse to the pivotal role of Nurse Team Leader and eventually Deputy Nurse Manager, I experienced a time filled with challenges and opportunities, each influencing me deeply. As I ascended through the ranks, I found myself immersed in a whirlwind of responsibilities that extended far beyond the confines of traditional nursing duties.

Managing clinical stock became more than just a matter of inventory; it was a delicate process of foresight and planning, ensuring that essential supplies were always present to meet the needs of our patients. Overseeing performance reviews ceased to be an administrative task; it became a great opportunity to recognise the contributions of my colleagues and provide them with the assistance and guidance they needed to thrive.

I had the privilege of guiding and nurturing the next generation of nursing professionals. As I shared my knowledge and experiences with junior colleagues, I found myself renewed by their enthusiasm and enthusiasm for the work we do.

I gained a new appreciation for the complexity of operational management and the nuances of leadership dynamics within the practice setting. I learned that true leadership is not about sacrificing authority or making grand pronouncements from high, but rather about rolling up your sleeves, leading by example, and empowering those around you to reach their full potential. It is about creating a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, where every voice is heard and every contribution is valued.

Reflecting on my journey from novice to deputy nurse manager, I am struck by how far I have come and how much I have yet to learn. Despite the uncertainties and challenges that remain ahead, one thing remains clear: I am exactly where I am, doing exactly what I am meant to do. And as I continue to navigate the ever-changing landscape of healthcare albeit now in an academic capacity, I do so with a feeling grateful for the experiences that have shaped me.

Empowering Leadership:

The transition to Nurse Manager is a significant milestone in my professional journey, indicating not only a significant milestone but also a deeply personal affirmation of my commitment to nursing leadership. I experienced a profound sense of responsibility weighing upon my shoulders, a responsibility not only to the patients who entrust us with their care but also to the colleagues who seek guidance and support.

As a staunch advocate for evidence-based care and continuous improvement, I took the opportunity to shape the practice's strategic direction, embarking on a mission to ensure that we remained at the forefront of healthcare excellence. Efforts to improve policy review and implementation were not just a task, but a vocation, a chance to transform my passion for quality care into tangible action.

However, my role as Nurse Manager extended beyond the boundaries of policy and procedure; it was about boosting the voices of frontline clinicians and promoting their needs in the highest levels of decision making. Through active participation in senior management meetings, I sought to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that the insights and perspectives of those at the bedside were heard and appreciated. I understood the power of advocacy in influencing change, and

I embraced my role as a voice for those I worked with who would daily provide compassionate, patient-centred care each day.

In this capacity, I became a leader, a facilitator of collaboration and empowerment, fostering a culture where every member of the team felt valued and empowered to contribute their unique talents and perspectives. I recognised that true leadership is not about standing at the front and issuing directives, but rather about standing beside your colleagues, supporting them in their growth and development, and empowering them to achieve their full potential.

As I reflect on my journey as Nurse Manager, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude for the opportunities that have shaped me and the colleagues who have accompanied me throughout the process. Together, we have experienced the challenges and celebrated the triumphs, united by a shared commitment to excellence and a shared belief in the transformational power of nursing leadership. As I look towards the future, I do so with a renewed sense of purpose and determination, knowing that the journey ahead may be challenging but also bridging opportunities for growth, innovation, and positive change.

Lessons Learned and Future Directions:

As I think about my journey from novice to nurse manager, I am struck by the profound impact that every twist and turn has had on my growth as a nurse and a leader. It has been a journey marked by moments of triumph and doubt, but through it all, one thing remains clear: the transformative power of mentorship, continuous learning, and unwavering resilience.

From my earliest days, I have been blessed with mentors who have generously shared their wisdom, guidance, and unwavering support. Their belief in my potential, even when I questioned it myself, has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation. Through their mentorship, I have learned not only the technical skills of nursing but also the intangible qualities that define great leadership—empathy, compassion, and the ability to inspire others to reach for greatness.

Equally important is my commitment to continuous learning, which is born out of a deep desire to constantly improve and evolve as a nurse and leader. Whether through formal education, professional development opportunities or simply looking for new challenges, I have embraced every opportunity to expand my knowledge and skills.

Perhaps the most defining quality of my journey has been resilience—the ability to cope with the storms of adversity and become stronger on the other side. Nursing is not for the faint of heart, and there have been moments when the burden of responsibility was overwhelming. But in those moments, I have moved to the inner reservoirs of strength and determination that lie in us all, pushing through the challenges with a firm resolve to never give up.

As I look towards the future, I am surrounded by a sense of purpose and determination, knowing that my journey is far from over. I am committed to nurturing the next generation of nursing leaders, just as my mentors have done. I am passionate about advancing the practice of general practice nursing through innovation, collaboration, and a persistent pursuit of excellence. I am grateful for the opportunities that are ahead, knowing that each new challenge is an opportunity for growth and a chance to make a significant difference in the lives of others.