

## The Midas Touch- Caring With Empathy

Usha Banerjee<sup>1</sup>, N. Rathina<sup>2</sup>, Babita Sen<sup>3</sup>, D. Maryline Flinsi<sup>4</sup>, Rohini Sharma<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Group Director of Nursing, Department of Nursing, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, India)

<sup>2</sup>(Senior Learning Officer, Department of Nursing, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, India)

<sup>3</sup>(Nursing Supervisor, Department of Nursing, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, India)

<sup>4</sup>(Principal, Apollo School of Nursing, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, India)

<sup>5</sup>(Vice Principal, Apollo School of Nursing, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, India)

Corresponding Author: Rohini Sharma

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**Abstract:** Patients, in the hospital, come stumped and frustrated. Sometimes the situations are beyond our control (they had a terrible day, or they are just a natural-born complainer etc.), which sometimes creep into the nurses' usual support. Nurses need to be confident in handling all situation at work place and need to be persistent to deal with them and figure out what they want. So, to inculcate empathy among nursing staff, a one-month campaign "The Midas Touch" was launch by the Department of Nursing across the Apollo Hospitals Groups. This article is showcasing the campaign details at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi (India). Weekly activities were planned which involved members of non- nursing departments as well like Doctors, Human Resource Department, Food & Beverages, Housekeeping Department etc. The outcome of the campaign was overwhelming. Empathy training enhanced the nurse- patient relationship, increased job satisfaction and improved patient outcomes. It helped the nurses to see through patients' eyes. Empathy spurs a more authentic response to patient needs and gives nurses a deeper awareness of what is going on with each individual patient. Hospitals that run- through empathetic care benefit by better patient compliance, which in turn, helps them reduce readmission rates and dodge medicare penalties.

**Keywords:** Communication in Healthcare, Empathy, Nurse- patient Relationship, Professional Communication, Therapeutic Communication

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### I. Introduction

Nurses and caregivers have one of the most demanding but least rewarding jobs of any profession. Knowing that you save or enrich someone's life makes the long hours and difficult days worthwhile. The positive impact technology can have on the patient experience cannot compensate for the empathetic care of nurses. In fact, of all the characteristics that make a great nurse, empathy is the most essential. Nurses are often on the front lines delivering care to patients who are scared and confused about everything from their medical condition to how they will pay their hospital bill.

**AIM-** It was aimed to incur empathy among nurses for the patients admitted in the hospital and their family. It was also designed to reduce patient complains, improve consultant satisfaction, improve Net Promoter Score and enhance Voice of Customer.

**NEED OF THE STUDY-**It is assumed that empathy would come naturally to someone who enters the field of healthcare but the truth is empathetic clinical care is often in short supply. Present generation nurses have to be emphasized on compassion and empathy and experienced nurses are resistant and lack positive response and they too need to be retrained for positive professional response

Nurses must work hard to make sure our patients are treated with dignity, respect and the compassion they deserve. Hope and empathy goes a long way in the care of the sick in hospital setting that warrants ideal interpersonal relationship with patient and provides optimistic outcome. It is paramount to build a sense of enduring differentiation for our brand and enhance emotional engagement with our patients which is more likely to generate large profit gains rather than rational ones

### II. Review of Literature

Kaur S[1] in her descriptive study "Assessment of level of empathy among nursing students during internship" stated that empathy is one of the therapeutic communication techniques for providing comfort to the client. The study was carried out on 46 nursing interns at a nursing college of a North Indian city. She

administered Jefferson Scale of Empathy three time before, during and completion of internship There was no significant change in the empathy score throughout the internship ( $F = 1.816, P = 0.167$ ). It may be because of the saturation level of empathy among the students of senior most class. There was no significant change in the empathy score throughout the internship ( $F = 1.816, P = 0.167$ ). It may be because of the saturation level of empathy among the students of senior most class.

Stewart W Mercer and William J Reynolds[2] in the article titled “Empathy and quality of care” discussed that in recent times, evidence has steadily accumulated in support of the utility of empathy in clinical nursing. For example, a study of the effect of nurses’ empathy on anxiety, depression, hostility, and satisfaction of patients with cancer showed significant reductions in anxiety, depression, and hostility in patients. Nurses have demonstrated high level of empathy and compassion for these patients

A review of CINAHL, Medline, Psych Info and Google Scholar was undertaken by Scott Brunero[3] using the keywords empathy, person centeredness, patient centeredness, client centeredness, education and nursing. The studies included were required to have measured the effectiveness of empathy training in postgraduate and or undergraduate nurses. The included studies incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods and were published in peer-reviewed journals. Studies were ranked for level of evidence according to The Joanna Briggs Institute criteria. Seventeen studies from the literature review were found that met the inclusion criteria. Of the 17 studies, 11 reported statistically significant improvements in empathy scores versus six studies that did not. Several variables may affect empathy education that need to be accounted in future studies such as; gender, cultural values and clinical specialty experience. Models of education that show most promise are those that use experiential styles of learning. The studies reviewed demonstrated that it is possible to increase nurses’ empathic ability.

### III. Methodology

The project was conceptualized by the Group Nursing Director, organized by the Department of Nursing and was implemented at Apollo Group of Hospitals across India in August 2018. This article is emphasizing on the campaign highlights of Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi.

It was a scheduled programme – A detailed toolkit explaining the activities and methodology was prepared and discussed with the nursing leadership team. [Table 1]

**Sample-** The target group for the campaign were customers:

**External customers (patients)** are most significant person in healthcare and we need to raise the bar for service by offering often small, yet heartfelt acts of hospitality to evoke powerful lived experiences that is an important element of the healing process.

**Internal customers (nurses)** are our valued resource. Emotions unlike other feeling states (e.g. mood, affect) involve a high degree of cognitive awareness that guide daily behaviour, simplify decision making and influence patient and clinical judgments.

**Table 1-** Calendar of Events under the Campaign

WEEK	DATE	ACTIVITY
Week 1	1 <sup>st</sup> August- 4 <sup>th</sup> August	<i>Examining Empathy Quotient</i>
Week 2	6 <sup>th</sup> August- 11 <sup>th</sup> August	<i>Expanding social-emotional competency &amp; emotional literacy skills</i>
Week 3	13 <sup>th</sup> August- 18 <sup>th</sup> August	<i>Little gestures make big differences</i>
Week 4	20 <sup>th</sup> August- 25 <sup>th</sup> August	<i>Can you really walk in my shoes???</i>
Week 5	27 <sup>th</sup> August –31 <sup>st</sup> August	<i>Empathy is for everyone</i>

#### Details of Weekly Activities Done under the campaign-

##### Week 1- Examining Empathy Quotient –Mystery audits

- Nursing leadership has arranged social experiments eliciting empathy. For example, alady was made to sit and cry loudly at a place where nurses pass through in large numbers (Scrub- meets- Suits meeting, post training, time office etc.). Face was covered with a scarf/saree to conceal appearance. The responses of staff passing by was recorded by non-observatory method. (The auditor was an unknown face to the nurses)
- An empty dead body trolley (hearse) was moved and the response of the individuals were recorded like stopping to pay respect or simply passing through/ talking or displaying casual body language (observed at the places where CCTV camera were in place)
- An individual was made to roam around in prominent public places like lobby, OPD, reception etc. looking confused. Response of individuals who offer help/ ignore was recorded.
- Made an individual to lie in a corner covered with blanket. The responses like concern, ignorance etc. were recorded.

The experiences were filmed on a mobile camera which was used discreetly. Non nursing members like HR staff/ Housekeeping staff/ security were made as actors for this audit (Patients’ video were not

captured). These scenarios were created in high staff zone like close to change rooms, training rooms, staff lifts etc.

**Week 2- Expanding social-emotional competency & emotional literacy skills- Class room sessions on Empathy was taken for all nurses**

- Small presentation
- Video on empathy<sup>4&5</sup>
- Interactive sessions on Empathy(Picture 1)
- The star employees who receive patient appreciations were interviewed and their successes recipe was noted. (Picture 2)
- The nurses who have been admitted in hospital at some point were visited and they were told to share what it feels to be patient

This was conducted in a formal manner and all feedbacks were recorded.

**Week 3-Little gestures make big differences**

- **A Day in Pink/Blue-** All charge nurses were made to don the uniform of staff nurse and report to team leader. The team leader assigned patients to them. Charge nurse worked as a staff nurse and take complete responsibility of his/ her patients and other duties. This was done in a happy manner. [Picture 3]
- **This is my job too (TIMJ2)-**All members of leadership team participated in at least 1 direct patient facing activity beyond the call of their duty. For example, moving patient via wheelchair, stretcher, bed etc./ providing personal hygiene/ ambulating a patient/ packing a dead body etc.
- **Nobody Dies Alone-** In case of terminally ill patients, as far as possible, it was advised to ensure presence of loved ones during death. The staff were sensitized on appropriate behaviour in the case of death. No casual talks, behaviours or body language. No one to cross hearse when the body is on the move/ Silence to be maintained in the lift in presence of a dead body/ 1-minute silent prayer with folded hands

**Week 4- Can you really walk in my shoes??? - Cultivating Empathy**

- Activity (Pledge- “If I am a nurse I will have to do it for 6 days for all my patients”)was done in all units covering all nurses – This was advised to be made as daily activity for 6 days covering all 3 shifts
- At the end of shift all nurses were told to describe the physical, emotional, economical and social turmoil of their patients or attendants
- The nurses were advised to imagine themselves in the position of the patient/ attendant and were told to experience the feelings the patient and attendant have
- At the end of the week, their stories were compiled and reviewed. The best stories were awarded
- Only initials and bed numbers were used – No patient name or other detail or consultant details was mentioned

**Week 5- Empathy is for everyone**

- A support group for patients were created - Example Oncology patients, transplant patients etc.
- Psychological counselling sessions were conducted for nurses working in high emotional intensity units like oncology, neonatology and paediatrics. (Picture 4)
- In coordination with Human Resource Department, one session of yoga, laughter therapy,Zumba, meditation and movie were arranged for the nurses. (Picture 5)
- Rewards and recognitions were given to the best stories and to the unit who participated enthusiastically. (Picture 6)

**IV. Result**

The campaign proved to be fruitful. Empathy training enhanced the nurse- patient relationship, increased job satisfaction and improved patient outcomes. It helped the nurses to see through patients’ eyes. This helped in providing effective & comprehensive nursing care and getting better understanding of the psychological issues of the patients. The campaign also enhanced their effective communication and helped them initiate tactics to raise patient satisfaction.

The feedback collected from the star employees showed that the success trick of them was empathetic and compassionate care; and going beyond the call of duty to meet the patient needs.

The comments collected from the staff who were admitted depicted that being a patient made them to realize the mindset of patients and they stated it would definitely change the way they care for the patients.

The charge nurses were amazed to see that their Supervisors took care of the patients because patient care is everyone’s core responsibility even though they are in administration. The attendants of the critically ill

patients were given ample time to stand next to their dear ones. A family- centered care was demonstrated, which was appreciated by all the patient attendants across all the units. Empathizing with patients means getting to know them in a deeper level to understand what they truly need and how to communicate with them in best possible way.

Staff were sensitized to the importance of listening to patients as it is crucial for providing prodigious service for a number of reasons. They developed ability to use positive language in their conversation patterns, that brought happiness to patients. Confidence in their communication skills helped them to deal with patients' problems.

In our hospital we were able to run the campaign as per the schedule and intent. It also helped develop leadership capabilities at unit level, providing nurses the opportunity to learn and lead as brand ambassadors of the organization.

The execution of campaign was prolific as the Net Promoter Score improved and there was a mass reduction in patient complains and staff got more WOW! Cards from the patients, which further amplified the result.

## **V. Conclusion**

Empathy and compassion are tools that change with work experience and associated with disease condition and prognosis of the disease. Poor communication with caregivers can leave them feeling frustrated, neglected and confused about what they need to do to improve their condition. While discussing medical instructions, test results or treatment options, patients like to know the reality of their condition. Keeping in mind the clinical condition of their loved ones nurses adopt to the individual situation while caring for patients in the hospital and while being discharged home.

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Figure 1- Interactive Sessions on Empathy



Figure 2- Meeting Star Employees



Figure 3- A Day in Pink/ Blue



Figure 4 Psychological Session for Nurses

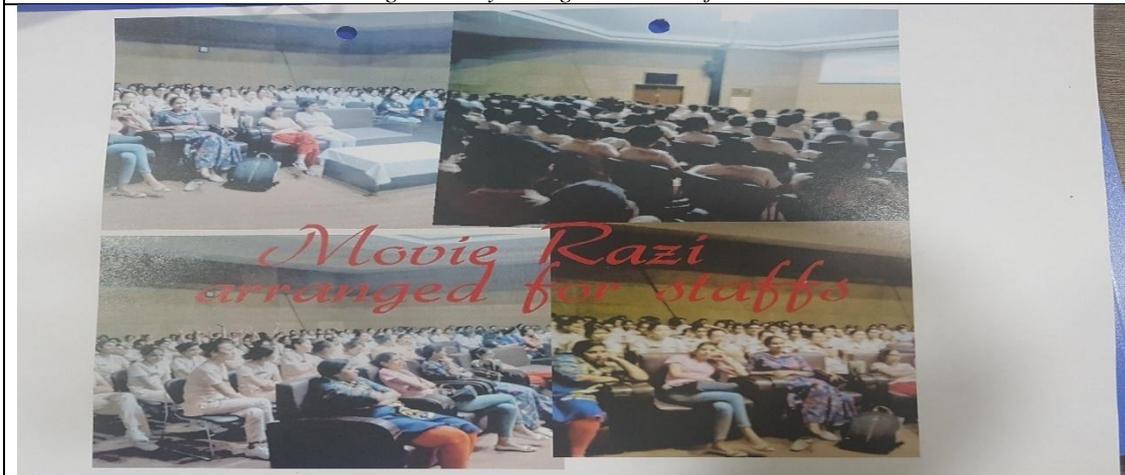


Figure 5- Hindi Movie "Raazi" shown to the Nurses



Figure 6- Closing Ceremony

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