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Commentary

Enhancing the nursing discipline and developing nursing science in China



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ABSTRACT

To improve our health care services, promote balanced development of inter-regional and inter-disciplinary medical care skills, and effectively implement public hospital reform, the former Ministry of Health, State Chinese Medicine Administration Bureau and the Ministry of Finance allocated state funds in 2010 to support a National Clinical Key Specialty Construction Project. The project supports the acquisition of key equipment, personnel training and development of clinical diagnosis technology in order to develop high-quality medical resources and improve clinical services. Because of the important role nursing plays, clinical nursing and specialty care were also included in the project. The Chinese Nursing Association was commissioned to oversee this project, which awarded 211 million RMB to nursing disciplines in 86 hospitals representing all regions of China. This funding has supported the rapid development of nursing disciplines, the results of which are outlined and described in this review.

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1. Nursing discipline in China

Nursing as a career has flourished in recent years due to attention from the Communist Party of China and the government. Top-level management continues to improve, in part by enactment of the Chinese Nursing Career Development Plan during implementation of the Eleventh and Twelfth Five-year Plans (2005–2010 and 2011–2015, respectively). The development plan plays an important role in strengthening nurse setup and promoting care, with the aim “to be close to patients, clinic and society”. Establishment of the Nurse

Regulations in 2008 provided protection of nurses' rights for the first time at the legislative level, and standardized nursing activities and clarified their duties. In addition, there has been significant progress in the formation of nursing teams.

The number of registered nurses has increased 106%, from 1.35 million in 2005 to 2.783 million in 2013. There are approximately two nurses for every thousand people, with an average doctor to nurse ratio of 1:1.00 in hospitals around the country (1:1.33 in secondary hospitals, and 1:1.52 in tertiary hospitals), resolving the inverted proportion problem [1]. The total number of registered nurses may exceed 2.8 million by the end of 2014. The education background of nurses is also

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transforming from secondary education into multilevel education, which includes secondary education and college and Bachelor's degrees. In 2012, 56% of nurses had at least a college degree, up from 31.6% in 2005, and 10.6% had a Bachelor's degree or above [2].

Commendable achievements have been made in nursing personnel training, service capabilities, nursing quality and system construction. Furthermore, the role of nursing in protecting and promoting health has widely been recognized by the public. However, social and economic development, disease spectrum changes, accelerated aging and a constantly improving quality of life have increased the public's demand for health and medical care services. Therefore, the nursing specialty needs to meet a higher requirement.

2. The National Clinical Key Specialty Subject Construction Project

In early 2010, quality care projects were officially launched with the principles of changing reform models, focusing on clinical care and system building, which led to an important breakthrough in the reform of public hospitals. The former Ministry of Health, State Chinese Medicine Administration Bureau and the Ministry of Finance allocated funds to establish the National Clinical Key Specialty Subject Construction Project. This project is comprised of two arms, one for clinical care construction and another for construction of specialty subjects. To support this endeavor, coherent policies were instituted and funding provided to create favorable conditions for building a solid platform for discipline construction and development. More specifically, the intent was to encourage hospital managers to assign more importance to nursing work, strengthen clinical care and develop specialty care, develop nursing practices that conform to the needs of public hospital reform and satisfy the public's increasing demand for healthcare.

2.1. Overall project goal

The overall goal of the National Clinical Key Specialty Subject Construction Project is to highlight priorities to enhance the overall nursing service that can serve as an example for the overall standard of nursing care and management in China. More specifically, the project aims to be steadfast in the welfare of patients in public hospitals by instilling a patient-centred concept through improving patient experience, ensuring their safety and fostering harmonious doctor-patient relationships. In addition, the project aims to improve the quality of nursing service by implementing accountability within holistic nursing care and expanding the service capabilities, skills and training of clinical nursing specialists.

2.2. Project missions

Aspects of nursing studies and practice that are focused on by each participating hospital include: patient-centred care, configuration and dynamic management of nursing human resources, performance assessment, core standards for

promotion, on-the-job training for nurses and training in critical and emergency specialty care. These can be further described as follows:

1. Providing quality care more thoroughly to keep patients safe and promote their recovery. Achievement of this task requires transformation of the working mode, clarification of responsibilities, assurance of a suitable number of frontline nurses and fostering of nursing grading standards.
2. Promoting training programs for the nursing staff. Various training programs should be established to suit the nurses' abilities and departments, particularly for critical and emergency specialty care. Training courses should be normalized and personalized, with training manuals for recording progress and ensuring that nurses are qualified to provide the necessary patient care.
3. Improving the management quality of nursing administrators. Additional study and training for specific administrative posts will help improve the quality of management and problem-solving abilities.
4. Reinforcing the ethics, regulations and standards. To develop accountable holistic nursing, the responsibilities and duties of nurses need to be more clearly defined and the promotion system more detailed. Moreover, nursing criteria need to be continuously updated to fit current clinical practices.
5. Practicing nursing skills that benefit the patients and promoting the use of appropriate equipment. Participating hospitals should provide facilities and nurses with suitable skills that benefit the patients, thus providing a safe, comfortable and healthy environment for expert medical service.
6. Improving the level of critical and emergency specialty care. Participating hospitals should possess superior critical and emergency specialty care for the local area and ensure all relevant nurses receive specialty training. More importantly, great effort should be made practice accountable holistic nursing in all units.
7. Establishing an objective appraisal system. A third-party evaluation system should be implemented based mainly on patient and public assessment, but also on self-assessment, to improve the quality of care. In addition, the nursing troop can be strengthened and stabilized by offering the best possible support and development to the staff.
8. Strengthening propaganda for nursing work. Propaganda describing excellent nurses and nursing work can be fortified through various kinds of media such as nursing newspapers, film, television and networks, so that the humanitarian spirit of caring for life, healing the wounded and rescuing the dying are well-known to everyone.
9. Providing assistance. To achieve the common goal, a participating hospital should provide other hospitals with opportunities for learning and training and assist primary hospitals with improving their quality of care.
10. Developing a plan of implementation. The project design and implementation plan put forth by

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