

# Managerial competencies of head nurses: a model and assessment tool

Nader Markazi Moghaddam, Sanaz Zargar Balaye Jame, Sima Rafiei, Ali Asghari Sarem, Ashraf Ghamchili and Milad Shafii

## ABSTRACT

Head nurses' performance plays an important role in the successful operation of hospitals. Identification and prioritisation of managerial competencies required for these supervisors and evaluation of their performance on this basis are necessary. This study aimed to provide a valid tool for assessing managerial competencies of hospital department head nurses. First, through literature review, Delphi technique and expert panel, a competency model was developed. Then using the analytic hierarchy process, competencies were weighted and prioritised. Finally, based on the model, an instrument was designed to measure the competencies of head nurses. Validity and reliability of the instrument was also checked. The proposed framework included 27 competencies categorised by four main managerial tasks: planning, organising, leadership and control. Findings revealed that the highest priority was given to strategic thinking (0.1221) and the lowest priority was given to evidence-based decision making (0.007). Based on impact score and content validity ratio results, the content validity of all questions has been proved. Furthermore through the use of a content validity index, 11 questions were omitted or modified. The study presents a valid and comprehensive model for assessing managerial competencies of hospital department head nurses in order to take an important step towards improving their performance.

**Key words:** Management ■ Assessment ■ Competencies ■ Leadership ■ Head nurses

The existence of an efficient and effective evaluation system for recognition of personnel competencies and capabilities can play a significant role in reducing organisations' costs and providing services with higher levels of quality (Meretoja and Leino-Kilpi, 2003; Shafii et al, 2016). Improvement in management performance may not be achieved unless there is an appropriate model for performance evaluation based on accurate and applicable indicators. Such a model provides an opportunity for proper and principled selection and training of managers who are capable of organising healthcare provision processes to be efficient, effective and responsive (Pillay, 2010; Liang et al, 2013).

Although there are different assessment methods, several studies have focused on competence-based approaches for evaluating the performance of healthcare managers, particularly head nurses—that is, the lead nurse for each particular clinical department (Arcand and Neumann, 2005; Cowan et al, 2005; Liu et al, 2007; Cummings et al, 2010; Pillay, 2010; Dadgar et al, 2012; Wongprasit, 2014).

In the last few years the significant role of head nurses in directing patient care affairs and provision of a healthy work environment for nursing staff has been emphasised more than ever (Hu, 2010). In fact, hospital-based head nurses, or nurse managers, not only need to accomplish their clinical practices, they are also required to carry out the administrative tasks that are entrusted to them due to their management responsibility. To fulfil the tasks effectively, they should be equipped with essential competencies to guide them in this direction. Furthermore, as nurse managers constitute a significant number of healthcare managers in the health market and their performance improvements potentially result in hospital excellence, developing a logical model for evaluating managerial competencies would be substantially beneficial (Liu et al, 2007). Despite this, a valid and comprehensive measurement tool has not been developed in the authors' country to evaluate the managerial competencies of this occupational group (Parry, 1997; Meretoja and Leino-Kilpi, 2003; Khomeiran et al, 2006). Thus in the current study the aim was to provide a valid tool for assessing managerial competencies of hospital department head nurses.

## Material and methods

This descriptive-analytical study was conducted in 2017 in six main phases. First a literature review was carried out using the scientific databases of Web of Science, PubMed, Science

**Nader Markazi Moghaddam**, Assistant Professor, Department of Health Management and Economics, School of Medicine, AJA University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

**Sanaz Zargar Balaye Jame**, Assistant Professor, Department of Health Management and Economics, School of Medicine, AJA University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

**Sima Rafiei**, Assistant Professor, Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, Qazvin, Iran

**Ali Asghari Sarem**, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Management and Accounting, Bu-Ali Sina University of Medical Sciences, Hamedan, Iran

**Ashraf Ghamchili**, MSc in nursing management (Master's graduate), AJA University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

**Milad Shafii**, Assistant Professor, Health Policy and Management Research Center, School of Public Health, Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, Yazd, Iran, [Milad.shafii@ssu.ac.ir](mailto:Milad.shafii@ssu.ac.ir)

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