

Topic 1

The Decision-Making Process

Decision-Making for Nurse Leaders

As a nurse leader, decision-making is a major component of your work. You encounter many situations that can be solved with relatively quick or straightforward decisions. Examples of simple decisions include scheduling staff for lunch or dinner breaks, ordering unit supplies, and determining who should perform quality control procedures on hospital equipment. These situations do not typically require a formal process or approach to lead you to the best decision.

When faced with complex situations, however, a structured decision-making process will help you solve problems, improve performance, and manage the tempo of your unit.

Features of Complex Situations

- Insufficient information is available—the facts may not be known.
- Consequences may be high-risk.
- Some of the alternatives may have undesirable consequences.
- Stakeholders may have biases and opinions.



Think About It!

A stakeholder is someone who has direct interest, involvement, or investment in the situation or issue at hand. In the context of nurse leaders, stakeholders may include patients and their families, teammates, supervisors, ancillary departments, and hospital administration. Can you identify additional stakeholders affected by the decisions you make as a nursing leader?

Decision-Making Process Overview

A decision-making process is a systematic approach to provide structure for making thoughtful, deliberate decisions and reducing the risk of biases or errors. The ability to identify and analyze problems, evaluate information accuracy, generate alternative solutions, and make sound recommendations and decisions is critical in your nurse leader development.

Why is a Decision-Making Process Important for Nurse Leaders?

A decision-making process provides the following:

- Structured approach
- Comprehensive analysis
- Team involvement
- Transparency and accountability
- Risk management



Key Point

Once you make your decision, prepare to explain it to those it impacts. Share the possible risks and anticipated benefits. The more information you share, the more likely you will have support for your decision.

Notes:

Decision-Making Process

Making good decisions takes practice. By consciously applying the decision-making process to solve difficult or complex situations, you improve the probability that your decisions will result in positive outcomes.



Source: Adapted from Guo, K.L. (2020.). DECIDE. The health care manager, 39(3), 133–141. <https://doi.org/10.1097/hcm.0000000000000299>

Activity: Apply the Decision-Making Process: Performance Improvement Council

Directions: Read the scenario. The instructor will lead a discussion based on the scenario.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL

In the conference room of the hospital, the Performance Improvement Council gathers for its regular meeting. As a nurse leader of the surgical unit, you sit among the prominent members of the council: the Chief of Surgery, the Chief of Anesthesiology, the Director of the Operating Room, a Pharmacist, an Infection Control Nurse, the Director of Nursing, and the Manager of Quality.

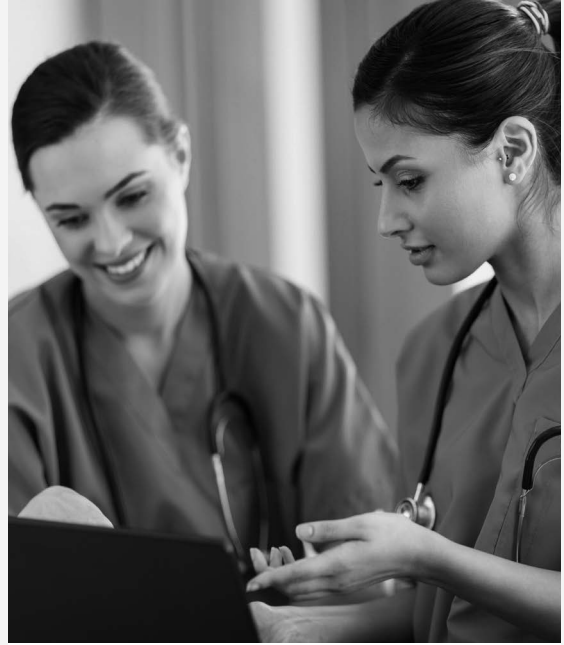
The meeting is in full swing when the Quality Manager brings up a concerning issue. "We've noticed a recurring problem on the surgical floor," he begins in a serious tone. "There have been several incidents of delayed urinary catheter removal in our surgical population. As per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, these catheters should be removed within 24 hours of surgery."

The Infection Control Nurse, a seasoned professional with a keen eye for detail, proposes a solution. "What if we develop a nurse-driven protocol, approved by physicians, to ensure catheter removal within 24 hours of surgery?" she suggests confidently.

However, the Chief of Surgery, a man known for his traditional views, disagrees. "I'm not in favor of nurse-driven protocols," he says firmly. "I prefer that nurses request an order from the surgeon if it hasn't been written already."

As a nurse leader, you know the practical implications all too well. "But that would mean calls during the night shift," you point out, "if we are to remove the catheter within 24 hours."

The Chief of Surgery frowns at the suggestion. "Night shift phone calls would be too disruptive," he counters.



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PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL (continued)

The discussion heats up when the Director of Nursing chimes in. "This isn't just a nursing issue; it's a surgeon problem," she argues, her voice laced with frustration. "Our nursing resources are already stretched thin. We can't take on this additional responsibility."

The room buzzes with tension as different viewpoints clash. The Quality Manager, seeking to move forward, interjects, "We need to reach a decision on this before our next meeting, which is two weeks from today."

The council members exchange looks, each deep in thought. It is clear that the council needs to find a solution, one that balances protocol with practicality. The solution should also balance responsibility with resources. As a nurse leader, you realize the weight of this decision, not just for the council, but more importantly, for the patients under your care. The meeting adjourns with a sense of unresolved urgency.

Notes:
