



SUMMARY NOTE | Virtual Learning Event | 30th August 2023

Nurse Leadership

This document summarises the third virtual learning event on nurse leadership organised by GenderCollab on 30 August 2023. The discussion was moderated by Dr Kaveri Mayra, University of British Columbia, Canada and featured Ms Evelyn P. Kannan (Secretary General, Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI)), Dr Sanjana Brahmawar Mohan (Basic Healthcare Services, Udaipur, Rajasthan), and Ms Soniya Modiya (Nurse Coordinator, Basic Healthcare Services, Udaipur, Rajasthan) as panellists.

Dr Kaveri Mayra began by inviting the speakers to share thoughts on the current scenario of nurse leadership in India. This was followed by a panel discussion on building competencies in health systems and addressing structural issues to facilitate nurse leadership and a Q&A with the audience.

See the [event recording here](#) and [the presenter slides here](#).

CONTEXT

In India, there is a gender deficit in leadership that is attributed to policy- and institutional-level barriers in terms of not having adequate leadership positions and existing positions either being kept vacant or being occupied by men. This is seen more pronouncedly in the nursing cadres. The absence of directorate-level positions for nursing cadres across most states precludes nurses from being represented or even involved in decision-making on matters related to their work; in the states where these positions are available, they have been filled by male doctors. Going beyond mere representation, an OPM study had experts asking for an enabling environment for substantive participation of the nurses in leadership roles. They pointed out that existing key governance positions for nurses need to be vested with authority and power to allow nurses to exercise decision-making and autonomy.

Within nursing, the professional hierarchy leaves nurses with little or no voice in policymaking. There are inadequate career pathways for nurses. Research on impediments to the performance of nurses and midwives has primarily focused on their individual capability and systemic resource constraints. The learning event covered some of these themes.

Dr Kavari Mayra opened the conversation by asking the audience about what Nurse Leadership meant to them.



Responded to 'What does Nurse Leadership mean to you? Why is it important?' Find all the responses in the appendix.

NURSE LEADERSHIP: INSPIRING OTHERS IN THE JOURNEY

Ms Evelyn P. Kannan began by describing how nurse leadership embodies the power to influence behaviours through exemplary actions. Her journey was shaped by the profound examples set by others during her formative years.

In the formative years of her career, influential mentors instilled within her a profound sense of empowerment and commitment. Their guidance emphasised the virtues of humility, sacrifice, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. These invaluable lessons have since formed the cornerstone of her nursing leadership philosophy – a philosophy centred on inspiring and empowering others, mirroring the mentorship she once received.

Reflecting on her journey, Ms Kannan highlighted the pivotal role of nurse leaders in stepping beyond their comfort zones. They serve as guides, motivators, and corrective forces, shaping the trajectory of nurses under their care. Drawing from her experiences, she emphasized the importance of accessibility and support, stressing the need for unity within the nursing community.



Nurse Leadership is depicted as shepherding and the spark in the matchstick that inspires other matches to glow.

Ms. Kannan embraces the notion of imperfection, recognizing that growth is contingent upon continuous learning and personal evolution. She advocates for a culture of ongoing development, urging nurses to embrace change and adapt to new paradigms. In doing so, she perpetuates the legacy of her mentors, fostering a new generation of empowered and compassionate nurse leaders.



"As a student, I was profoundly influenced by a doctor who emphasised the importance of being present for people, standing by them through thick and thin, empowering them through my actions, and sometimes making sacrifices...[]. As the world evolves, so must we, equipping ourselves with knowledge while empowering others for a unified and collaborative approach to excellence."

- Ms. Evelyn Kannan

In essence, Ms. Kannan's approach to nurse leadership encapsulates a commitment to service, mentorship, and personal growth. It is a testament to the enduring impact of those who have shaped her journey, and a blueprint for the future of nursing leadership.

A visionary leader is characterized by their unwavering commitment to realising their vision, while also nurturing a culture of empowerment and inclusivity within their team. Central to their approach is the belief in collective effort, epitomized by the ethos of "I, You, We," which underscores the importance of collaboration and unity in pursuit of the shared objective of patient care.

ENABLING NURSE LEADERSHIP IN REMOTE & RURAL AREAS: INSIGHTS FROM BASIC HEALTH SERVICES (BHS), UDAIPUR

Dr. Sanjana Mohan shed light on Basic Health Services (BHS) in Udaipur, operating within remote rural areas, delivering cost-effective, and high-quality care with dignity. With six Primary Healthcare Clinics and a government Primary Health Centre (PHC) operating around the clock, BHS stands as a beacon of accessibility and reliability for the communities it serves.

Drawing from a decade of experience, Dr. Mohan underscored the indispensable role nurses play in providing continuous care. However, she highlighted the significant challenges nurses encounter, both professionally and personally, due to insufficient support systems from their work environments and families. This lack of support, coupled with limited decision-making autonomy, contributes to diminished motivation and confidence among nurses. Moreover, inadequate training and supervision exacerbate the already demanding nature of their responsibilities.



"Nurses play a central role in the clinics to ensure continuity of care is provided."

- Dr Sanjana Mohan

Dr. Mohan advocated for empowering nurses to assume leadership roles and fostering their confidence and self-belief. She emphasized the pivotal role of nurse leaders in inspiring and motivating others to take charge. Dr. Mohan envisions strong, cohesive teams capable of addressing pressing healthcare needs, such as increasing patient attendance for regular check-ups, reducing mortality rates, and ensuring comprehensive immunization coverage for all children.

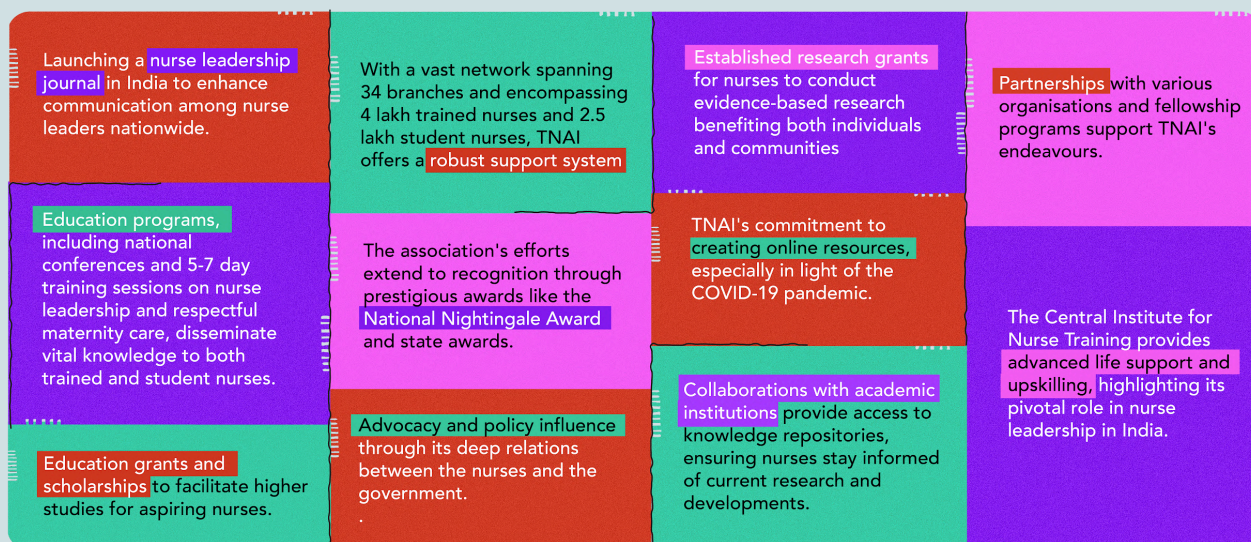
NAVIGATING NURSE LEADERSHIP AT BASIC HEALTH SERVICES: ENABLING FACTORS & EXPERIENCES

Ms. Modiya highlighted three fundamental traits of effective nurse leadership: behaviour, trust, and a sense of community. She underscored the significance of actively listening to team members' challenges and collaboratively seeking solutions. Moreover, she stressed the extension of this empathetic approach to patients, addressing their holistic health needs and working with them to find solutions.

Ms Modiya further underscored the pivotal role of trust in fostering empathetic communication within the team. She emphasized the creation of a supportive environment that encourages, recognizes, and assists team members, thereby empowering them to make autonomous decisions. Moreover, Ms Modiya highlighted the importance of self-belief in nurse leadership, with the mantra "I can and I will" serving as a driving force for effective leadership in nursing.

EMPOWERING NURSE LEADERS: CONTRIBUTIONS, CHALLENGES AND COMMITMENT

Ms Evelyn shared some of the initiatives that TNAI, a 150-year-old association does to facilitate, motivate, and sustain nurse leadership in the country:



TNAI has established the [National Nurses Museum](#) dedicated to honouring the invaluable contributions of nurses, spanning their rich history, impactful present, and promising future. Ms. Kannan underscored the significance of such platforms, providing nurses with opportunities to engage with diverse aspects of their profession. Moreover, Ms. Kannan emphasized the importance of leadership and mentorship programs tailored to young nurses, who frequently bring innovative ideas to the table. These initiatives are instrumental in fostering their professional development and nurturing excellence within the nursing community.

“TNAI goes beyond advocating for nurse welfare; it actively equips nurses for continuous professional development, thereby enhancing the quality of care provided.” - Ms Evelyn P. Kannan

However Ms Evelyn highlighted challenges including reluctance among some nurses to undergo training, prompting governmental mandates. Despite these hurdles, initiatives like community outreach programs ensure that care reaches those in need, reflecting TNAI's commitment to advancing healthcare access and quality.

ENABLING NURSE LEADERSHIP IN REMOTE & RURAL AREAS: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

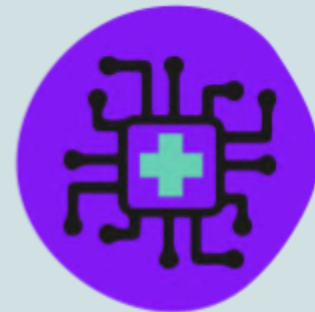
Dr Mohan shared that rural Rajasthan grapples with a substantial burden of infectious diseases, such as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), malnutrition among women and children, alongside reproductive health conditions. To address these pressing health issues, there is an urgent requirement for healthcare services to be accessible round-the-clock to meet the demands of the community. Dr Sanjana shared key elements for the provision of effective healthcare services from her experience at BHS, Udaipur. These include:



Comprehensive training programs, established protocols, and job aids for nurses, along with follow-up training to ensure ongoing skill development



On-the-job mentoring and support systems further enhance nurses' capabilities and confidence in delivering quality care.



Leveraging technology as an enabler in supporting nurses to deliver services.



Emphasising a team approach to primary care, involving health workers, nurses, and doctors, facilitates task sharing rather than task shifting, promoting efficient and collaborative care provision.



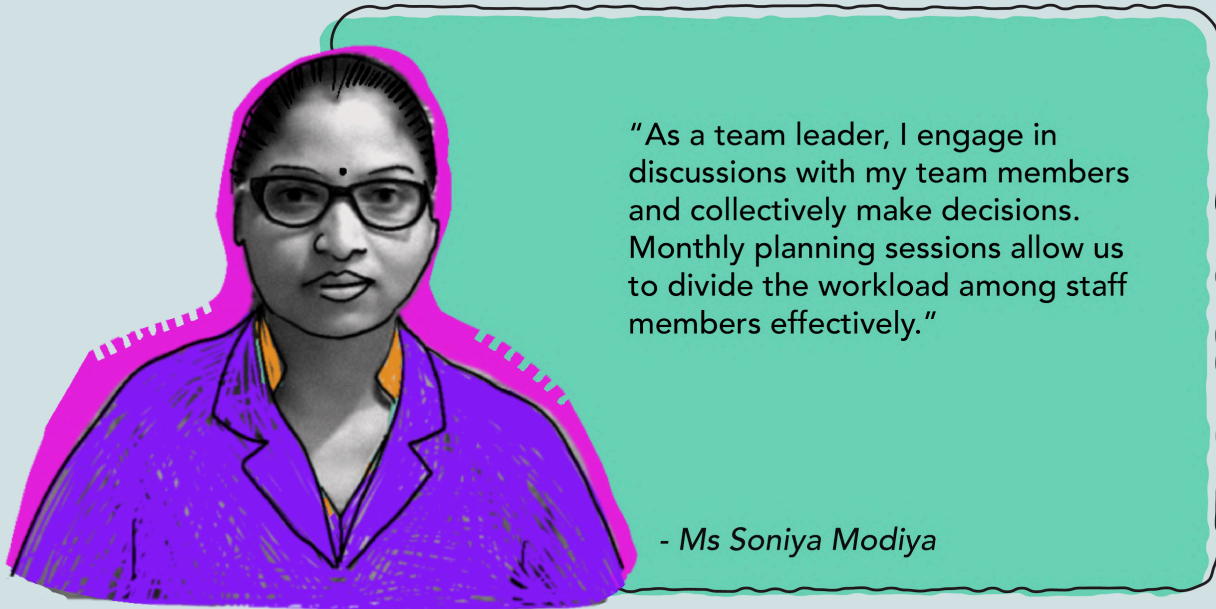
Acknowledgement of dignity and respect for nurses, along with providing ample recognition opportunities for their professional growth and contributions.

Together, these elements form a robust foundation for optimising nursing practice and enhancing positive patient outcomes in healthcare settings.

NURSE LEADERSHIP AT THE PRIMARY HEALTHCARE LEVEL: EXPERIENCES FROM WORKING ON THE GROUND

Ms Sonia shared her experiences where she relied on instructions from supervisors, but now how she takes charge of planning and leading much of the work.

The focus at the clinic level lies in continuously improving the work processes and overcoming challenges as a team. Ultimately, success is measured by the ability to collaborate, innovate, and achieve together.



“As a team leader, I engage in discussions with my team members and collectively make decisions. Monthly planning sessions allow us to divide the workload among staff members effectively.”

- Ms Sonia Modiya

NURSING'S IMPACT IN POLICY AND RESEARCH

Dr Kaveri Mayra acknowledged how as a nurse researcher who has made significant contributions to nursing and nursing policy, the journey remains challenging. In the medical hierarchy, nurses often find themselves situated at the bottom, with limited upward mobility. The perception that nursing primarily serves a supportive function maintains this dynamic.

However, to truly elevate nursing and its impact, there is a pressing need for nurses and nursing to be recognized as a separate department within the Ministry of Health. Only through this restructuring can nurses come to positions of leadership and influence. Establishing a directorate of nursing would be a pivotal step towards contributing to policy recommendations at the state level, empowering nurses to shape the future of healthcare delivery and policy.

RESOURCES

1. [Challenges and needed reforms in midwifery and nursing regulatory systems in India: Implications for education and practice | PLOS ONE](#)
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BACKGROUND

[Oxford Policy Management \(OPM\)](#) is implementing a project on 'Adaptive Learning for Gender Responsive Health System' supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (India Country Office) following their continued support to action towards gender integration in health systems in their areas of investment. As a part of the project, OPM has set up the [GenderCollab](#)— a new Community of Practice, that brings together partners to work towards advancing gender intentionality within the health systems. It is anchored by OPM and facilitated by [Quicksand](#).

Towards the objective of fostering knowledge exchange with practitioners and researchers who work on Gender and Health System Strengthening (GHSS) related issues, GenderCollab hosts [virtual learning sessions](#).

APPENDIX

Chat-based Responses to: What does Nurse Leadership mean to you? Why is it important?

Radha Vyas - Nurse leadership is defined by their actions, not by their position or authority. It's important upon critical thinking skills to manage teams and it helps others to achieve their maximum potential.

Bani Chakraborty - To ensure the psychological safety of all nurses. To maintain a team approach for effective quality care. Transformational leadership.

Manisha Vadhiya - Leader is one who creates more powerful, knowledgeable, visionary, and confident people in the way of Nursing.

Unnamed Participant - Nurse is a dynamic person.

Vasundhara Tulasi Tirunagari - Dynamism in leadership comes with her charisma in building good human relationships.

Maj Ranjana Banik - A nurse leader is someone who has a vision for the organisation. She foresees, plans, analyses, implements and evaluates the program. The backbone of any institution is a nurse, the scope of a nurse leader is to give more strength to the organisation and facilitate smooth conduct of the institution as we are the ones who are 24 x 7 in the organisation.

Y Shailaja - Leadership is leading the team with or without authority, to achieve the desired goal. For nurses it means providing quality health services through effective utilisation of available resources. At which ever setting we are in

Sarita Pandey: Nurses should take leadership or lead to define roles and responsibilities at each step of working to the well-being of individuals.

Dr. Jibi George: For me, Leadership means a competent, knowledgeable and skilled nurse being assertive for what she thinks is right for herself, for her patients or students and for her profession. This is very important to claim the autonomy of the Nursing Profession which is the need of the hour. Most importantly, Nursing leadership should be inclusive, for the entire Nursing fraternity.

Chandrika Rai – Nurse leadership should be physically, mentally healthy. Empathetic to understand others problems. proactive and should not be judgmental. should be inculcated with knowledge, skills and attitude and have good intersectoral coordination.

Radha Vyas - Nurse leadership is a quality to inspire and influence everyone irrespective of position to overcome all healthcare problems.

Vasundhara Tulasi Tirunagari - Leadership for the accountable guidance given to all team with leader been participating actively towards goal accomplishment

Priya Nanda - Nurse leadership is always a power house of any health care set up to deliver safety care. Because one nurse must be knowledgeable she should have vision and mission,also she should work as a change agent herself and escalate difficult decisions. It should be no different than leadership in other settings–having resources and spaces to be empowered to make decisions, guide the work of your team, lead and supervise teams, manage and design work flows and be accountable for overall quality, and fight for resources that your team needs to do their work-as well be affirmed by others in the system for the role you play a leader. Nurses are unique since their leadership is less visible to others as much of their work is in the service of others and they are groomed to be selfless.

Sebi Das - Who empowered others colleagues, customers , showed the path of transformation by action and hand holding. Leader act as change agent, bring the transformation.

Mercy Sujay - Leadership for me is to have a Voice to inspire and influence my fellow nurses..... And bring a change in Nursing Standards..... It's important because Nurses need Capable leaders who can guide them in genuinely making a difference in the lives of people they are serving....

Lilly Sunny - For me leadership means totally a mother figure where leaders should be a visionary, focused, competent, and protective totally for the people with them. Need to show the team they are valued important. Then only the team can perform productivity

Blessy Jose - Nurse leadership: means playing a managerial role in the healthcare sector. Firstly, having leadership qualities in a nurse is quite challenging, but to execute in the right way with team spirit in order to attain the health status of patients should be the foremost approach. We nurses play many roles in our health sector such as counsellors, advocates and being empathetic are also required.

Vienna Myral Fernandes - Nurse leadership serves as a role model for the other nursing staff. It is important in setting goals, organising the work, to bring about cooperation among staff, taking initiatives to new tasks, it also helps in motivating others.

Blessy Jose - The main thing in accepting a nurse' s decision needs to be changed...

Chandrika Rai (Sikkim) - It would be appreciated if nurse leaders were also included in Policy making in the top level management .

Unnamed Participant - Mam we need nurse leader in member of parliament so that i can voice out and make decision and support fellow nurses

Unnamed Participant - More of we and less of me in team members is the quality which a great leader nurtures

Priyanka Usgaonkar - Very true . Nurses need a seperate dept.

Unnamed Participant - In Odisha also director nursing there but given to a doctor

Unnamed Participant - Credit for success of team efforts to team members and blame on herself or himself for failure of team members. and our leaders know this but no one raises their voice ..till now.

Its started and doctor heading post of nursing director since 2014

Blessy Jose - Shailaja ma'am says right, we nurses should get the positions according to the years of experience and on the basis of skills as well.

Priya Das - I think nurses have the passion but I think the system now needs to get passionate about creating nurse leaders