2.9: Managing Workforce Diversity

Nurse leaders play a pivotal role in creating a supportive work environment where cultural and generational differences are valued and individual differences are supported and accommodated. The following are some key recommendations and strategies for nurse leaders in a diverse workforce:

- Set an example through your own behaviour by appreciating diversity in order to create and maintain a supportive work environment. Employees want to feel valued and involved regardless of their age or job title. Demonstrating respect for cultural and generational perspectives is a way to support and foster teamwork (Yukl, 2013). Withholding judgement, emphasizing the positive, and practising good communication techniques creates success.

- Hold all staff to the same employment expectations and organizational goals related to valuing workplace diversity. In doing so, you set ground rules for each individual’s professional conduct and professional practice.

- Seek to learn more about diversity and educate your staff about cultural and generational differences with respect to attitudes, behaviours, and values while simultaneously fostering a cohesive work group (Yukl, 2013).

- Match the diverse needs of workers with diverse patient needs. Embracing commonalities and maximizing diversity through individual talents is critical to lead positive change in the work environment. In turn, success with culturally diverse patients and families can foster the recruitment of a diverse workforce. The synergy of diverse viewpoints can improve nursing’s knowledge base and care strategies.

- Use a flexible, open, and approachable leadership style sensitive to creating equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination while acknowledging differences. Although this approach takes considerable effort and energy, it is vital for creating a supportive work environment.

- Be flexible in accommodating a variety of communication styles that align with cultural and generational preferences.

- Explain benefits of workplace of diversity (Yukl, 2013). An open forum with staff that engages new and different ways of thinking and approaches to problem solving and conflict resolution can improve care practices.

- Recognize that differences can be a source of stress and conflict (Hahn, 2011). The differences among the generations can have a direct impact on how problems, assessments, and intervention strategies are determined (Huber, 2014). Consider issues of communication style, interpersonal space, time sense, and other variations in
beliefs and behaviours in order to promote effective teamwork.

- Create workplace autonomy and promote professional growth by coaching and mentoring staff in various stages of career development. Doing so can influence workplace culture and practices to enhance job satisfaction and retention. Providing opportunities for leader development, advancement of clinical skills, and participation in committee work can improve communication skills, motivational efforts, and problem solving. For example, supporting a staff member’s participation on a unit or hospital committee may increase group cohesion, innovation, and autonomy in the workplace (Kramer, 2010).