

# MANAGEMENT OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCY

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## Abstract

*Competency Manager is a software application designed to manage key competencies in nursing, providing systemic support to manage managerial competencies, which are also crucial for nursing but are currently undervalued. This application was developed within a project of applied research for a specific client, a health care facility. The architecture and significance of the software application have already been published. This article focusses on creating a model for managing managerial competencies, which, unlike other competency groups, were not subject to legislative norms, but aimed to meet the client's needs. The article outlines theoretical foundations and evidence-based methods (stakeholder engagement strategy, evidence-based implementation with change agents, discussion, brainstorming, and Delphi method for review within expert panel) leading to the selection, description, and implementation of 9 core managerial competencies within the created model.*

## 1. Introduction

The Czech Republic, like many other European and other countries, has recently suffered from a lack of general nurses, especially in acute care hospitals in inpatient wards. A more effective setting of competencies for nurses could lead to better utilisation of their work capacity and solving nurse and physician shortages in the Czech healthcare system.

The shortage of nurse's overloads existing staff and places high demands on management. Therefore, as part of the stabilisation in recent years, the salaries of general nurses and other health workers have increased significantly. General nurses perceive higher financial remuneration as a motivating factor, but not as a major factor that influences job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is considered a crucial

indicator of employee retention (Coomber and Barriball, 2007; Alameddine et al., 2017) related to management, teamwork, job competence, and perceived respect for one's work.

The results of our latest research (Glajchová et al., 2021) showed that management and teamwork are two of the main factors determining job satisfaction of general nurses. Nurses associate their job satisfaction with relationships with supervisors and the leadership style used to ensure the smooth running of the department. From a sample of 2,479 general nurses (out of a population of approximately 80,000), 27.9% reported being in a leadership position (of which the majority, 53%, were line manager nurses), and only 4% reported having received managerial training.

Most nurse managers on the front line do not have the necessary management training and are – from a qualification perspective – not prepared to perform a managerial function. The education and performance of a nurse is governed by legislation. For the preparation of nurse managers, a specialised study programme is offered at the Faculty of Health faculties, Organisation, and Management in Health Care. A general nurse with a bachelor's degree can study this specialisation. A nurse with a bachelor's degree can also obtain management qualifications in master's Health of Administration programs (often financially unavailable) or other study programs in other types of faculties. However, the acquisition of specialised or other managerial education is not a condition to perform a managerial function in most Czech hospitals.

As part of the Competent Nurse of the 21st Century project conducted in 2019-2021, supported by the Czech Technology Agency, we developed a software application for the management of general nurses' competencies. Support and development of competencies strengthen the identities and professionalism of nurses and are a source of satisfaction / dissatisfaction and well-being of practice nurses in the UK (Wood, 2021). The study by Numminen et al. (2016) also revealed significant connections between commitment and competency settings, fluctuation intentions, and job satisfaction. The competence model we developed (Holá et al., 2022) is based on valid legislation regulating the professional competence of general nurses and on the results of research on the fulfilment of these competences in performing the profession. It is a model for more effective use of the working capacity of general nurses, in order to increase the efficiency of the education, training, development, and performance of nursing professions, especially in competencies that are not based on legislative standards. The competence encapsulates legislative norms, acquisition of professional specialisation, and competence assigned by the organisation (administrative, organisational, managerial, mentoring, etc.). The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how to create a model for managing managerial competencies in nursing within an acute care hospital.

## **2. Theoretical frame**

The basic starting point for nursing management competencies could be the publication Leadership Competencies for Healthcare Services Managers from 2015 by the International Hospital Federation (IHF, 2023). This consortium adopted the basic competency framework as a basis for the development of healthcare management with a recommendation for use in an academic environment to train future nurses.

Another suitable source for creating a set of managerial competencies was the American Organisation of Nurse Executives (2015), and the Management Competency User Pack for Nurses and Midwives (MCUP) presented by Office for Health Management, 2023) also proved to be a suitable basis. This user pack created by more than 70 Irish hospitals, offers great inspiration for setting up management competencies based on evidence based. The material is devoted to individual areas of competence, using examples of signals of their absence (indicators of less effective performance), the authors show

their importance, and define specific application possibilities. The material is very extensive and detailed for individual competencies. Recommendations for setting competencies in practice through education and development are also an important part. The authors highlight their significance and also delineate specific application possibilities. The material is extensive and detailed with respect to each competency. An important part includes recommendations for setting competencies in practice through education and development.

In their research, the authors of the MCUP identified 8 general competency areas that are the basis for effective performance at all levels of nursing management and 13 additional critical competencies for different levels of management, namely three for frontline workers, five for middle management, and five for top managers. General competencies, see below.

- Support for Evidence-Based Decision Making
- Building and maintaining relationships
- Communication and Influencing Skills
- Initiation of innovations
- Resilience and Balance
- Integrity and ethical attitudes
- Sustained personal commitment.
- Professionalism

The authors also included the following areas in the competency categories for top management, for example strategic and systemic thinking, for middle management should primarily derive from leadership area, and for front-line management, the authors identified three significant competency areas: planning and organisation, team building and leadership, management and supervision of clinical practice, and quality of service delivery. Many authors agree and their work confirms that the dominant competency in management and leadership is communication and relationship-based management. This is affirmed by the competency model mentioned above the IHF (2015) which emphasises Communication and Relationship Management as one of 5 main competency areas, and, for example, it is also evidenced by the authors of the publication "Effective Nursing Leadership: Performing" (Cziraki et al., 2018), which emphasises the importance of managerial communication in nursing.

Communication competencies listed in the Gower Handbook of Internal Communication (Wright, 2016) could be a suitable starting point. In the chapter 'What makes a competent communicator', communication competences are defined as a sum of knowledge, skills, and experience, which are manifested not only in rhetoric and contemporary speech, but in the general actions and behaviour of a manager. The first most important competency is Building effective relationships.

### **3. Methodology and results**

The purpose of creating a competency model and the Competency Manager software application was to effectively set up competency management at any stage of professional performance, specifically during the adaptation period, stable performance, and during re-assessment and development through lifelong learning. The competency model itself can serve as an appendix to job descriptions in

accordance with national legislation, requirements for meeting standards, certificates of safe and quality care, and requirements for human resource management of healthcare facilities in practice.

The creation of the competency model (content) and its implementation in the form of the Competency Manager software application primarily relied on compiling the best practices found in the literature review and the needs of the application guarantor. By involving management and experts from the ranks of the application guarantor, the recommended stakeholder engagement strategy (those who will support the implementation of the result) according to (Gallagher-Ford et al., 2011) and change agents (experts who created what they will work with) in the preparation and implementation of the project according to the recommendations of the JBI Evidence Implementation Manual (Porritt et al., 2020) was applied.

The technological process of creating a software application and its deployment into the intranet environment of the application guarantor can be found in the publication by Holá and Čegan (2019). A detailed description of the creation of the application and its functions according to the client's requirements is given in the publication Holá et al. (2022).

An expert panel was formed as a working group consisting of nursing care experts from (the principal applicant guarantor and opponents from the ranks of the main representatives of other guarantors. This working group (11 experienced nurse managers with more than 20 years nursing experience and a minimum of 5 years of management position experience in clinical nursing, and 2 representatives of application guarantors as supervisors from Czech Association of Nurses and certification body for quality and safety of providing care) regularly met with the aim of defining the basic framework of the competency model, its content and the framework of conditions for its implementation. The group used methods such as moderated discussion, brainstorming, and mutual interaction, as well as principles of the Delphi method for collecting and sorting data, information, and knowledge. The system design idea is based on the definition of the system according to Hall and Fagen (1968), and the advantages of systemic setting are also declared within the recommendations of JBI Evidence Implementation (Porritt et al., 2020) and recommendation by Winter (2018) in The design of an Evidence-based Competency Model which also includes education and development of the given competency, its reassessment, and adoption as part of onboarding process and its integration into the education system and human resources management standards as part of management quality standards.

After analysing hospital needs, considering all best practices as results of the literature review and discussions within the activities declared above, the expert group selected nine key managerial competencies for nursing managers (72 competencies were chosen in total), which were further elaborated; see the example of building effective relationships shown in Fig.1.

- Financial management and economy
- Regular evaluation of workers
- Application of professionalism
- Personal management
- Managerial communication and relationship building
- Leadership
- Conducting safe and quality care
- Information management
- Strategic management

<b>Regular Employee Evaluation and Development</b>
This competence entails the consistent and thorough evaluation of nursing staff performance, coupled with active engagement in their professional development. The supervisor demonstrates adeptness in various aspects of evaluation, including tool selection and program design. They conduct regular evaluations, meticulously documenting protocols and ensuring the continuity of the process. Moreover, they conduct evaluation interviews aimed at enhancing key competencies and fostering individual career growth. They adeptly identify strengths, weaknesses, and developmental obstacles, motivating staff to set and achieve new goals. Collaboratively, they establish conditions for further development, aligning with the employee's expectations and organizational needs. Together with the employee, they devise educational plans for the future, adjusting based on assessment outcomes. Additionally, they assign, adjust, and reassess key competencies, influencing personal allowances based on performance evaluations
<b>Assigns/verifies by Supervisor nurse</b>
<b>Acquisition Conditions:</b> A minimum of 6 months in a management position coupled with internal training
<b>Re-evaluation Frequency:</b> Employee evaluations are conducted per 2 years
<b>Mandatory/Recommended Education:</b> Training in the adaptation process, completion of an external management course, specialized education in Organization and Management in Healthcare, pursuit of an MBA or managerial higher education, and participation in an internal course facilitated by a competence mentor, preferably from HR or a training background.
<b>Mandatory/recommended education:</b> Training in the adaptation process, external management course, specialized education Organization and management in health care, MBA, managerial higher education, internal course led by a competence mentor - HR or trainer
<b>Compliance with internal standards:</b> Adaptation process, employee evaluation, manual for working with SW Competence Manager

**Figure 1. Example of key managerial competency description**

Source: (author)

All selected competencies must be regularly evaluated and developed; just as key competencies tied to job performance. In the case of adapting a new nurse manager, emphasis is placed on acquiring each competency. The education of nurse managers is tied to the development of these key competencies.

## 4. Discussion

The work of the Finnish team Pihlainen, Kivinen, and Lammintakanen (2016) noted the fundamental conclusion that the creation of a framework for the development of managers and leaders in hospitals is a necessary prerequisite not only for their own development, but for that of the entire organisation. This support must reflect the assessment of their role, as well as the implementation of changes and the response to current challenges in the delivery of health care. The authors state that the basic framework of managerial competencies must include, in addition to professionally orientated competences, also general competences of management and leadership. These competencies clearly belong to the strategic development of the organisation because the fulfilment of basic managerial

competencies improves the motivation and performance of managers and the performance of the entire organisation. Even in Lenburg's (1999) basic nursing competency model, managerial and leadership competencies are an essential part of the competency model for nurses. The authors provide evidence of the importance of managerial competencies for team performance and creativity based primarily on managerial communication from their study (Boies, Fiset & Gill, 2015).

From this point of view, it is very positive that the authors of the competency model succeeded in creating a set of acceptable managerial competencies for nursing care in an acute care hospital, which until now only worked with professional competencies defined by legislation for the performance of the nursing profession. Especially because nearly 80% of nurse managers in the survey by Glajchová et al. (2021) report the absence of managerial education.

Managerial competencies are the competencies of a professional, and, like other competencies, they are based on a combination of soft (emotional) and hard (knowledge-based) skills. According to Holá (2017), management communication is a tool for advocating and achieving organisational goals and therefore is a highly significant competency and an important part of the internal communication system. For this reason, it is necessary to ensure adequate development of managerial communication competencies. For several years now, the Faculty of Health Studies has been providing the Managerial Communication in Nursing course, mainly for cooperating hospitals (Holá, Moravcová, Hlaváčková, 2020) and in response to demand the faculty opened a specialised master's program in Healthcare Organization and Management for nonmedical healthcare professions in 2022.

Although MCUP (2023) identified not only eight general competence areas that are the basis for effective performance at all levels of nursing management, it also defined additional critical competencies for different levels of management, as mentioned in the previous pages, in our case the selected competencies are the same for all levels of management and are perceived more generally than specifically. The client preferred this general setting, rejecting specific competencies such as critical thinking, and wanting to set competencies that are generally accepted and feasible in his environment. For the implementation of the entire competence model, it was very important that it be acceptable for practice. Although some unimplemented competencies and their implementation certainly belong to evidence-based nursing management, they cannot be "screwed" without primary system changes.

The competency model for managerial skills was developed within a public healthcare facility and can serve as an inspiration for other facilities to establish their own specific models, with a similar or different number and content of competencies. The significance of conceptualizing managerial competencies is also supported by the authors of the study "Exploring the management competencies of nurse managers in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana" (2020). Therefore, this issue should not be overlooked in Czech healthcare, approved by the Ministry of Health.

Nursing management education should be a priority for hospitals because it influences the quality of care provided, thus affecting the well-being of the entire society (International Council of Nurses (2020)).

## **5. Conclusions**

The creation and selection of managerial competencies was one of the most difficult parts of creating the content of the competency model. Managerial competencies, in contrast to professional competencies focused on nursing performance, are not described in any legislation, and the employer should define them himself. The importance of the influence of managers on employee performance

is indisputable and supported by evidence in the Czech healthcare sector, or in acute care hospitals, management, as in many nonmedical fields, is underappreciated. However, staff shortages pose many challenges to management at all levels and will become increasingly significant. The absence of managerial education and the unconscious prioritisation of managers' intuitive, no systemic setting in the unstable healthcare sector are obstacles that our healthcare sector must overcome and with which the university can significantly help in education and research. The Competence Manager application is still in trial operation; however, managerial competencies are already being reflected in the setting of the competencies of nurse managers and in their development.

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