Topic 2.14. Duties of Nursing Staff in a Polyclinic/ Тема 2.14. Обязанности среднего медицинского персонала в поликлинике

A polyclinic is a primary healthcare institution where patients receive outpatient medical care. It is the first point of contact between the population and the healthcare system. The polyclinic provides preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative services to the population living in a defined service area. The effectiveness of a polyclinic depends largely on the work of its nursing staff, who constitute the largest group of healthcare workers and are involved in almost every aspect of patient care.

Types of Nursing Staff in a Polyclinic

Nursing personnel in a polyclinic are divided into several categories according to their qualifications and responsibilities:

1. **Head nurse (senior nurse)** — manages the entire nursing staff of the polyclinic. She is responsible for the organisation of nursing work, scheduling shifts, controlling the quality of nursing care, maintaining medical equipment and supplies, and ensuring compliance with sanitary-epidemiological requirements. The head nurse reports directly to the chief physician of the polyclinic.
2. **Department nurse (senior nurse of a department)** — assists the head of the department in organisational matters. She supervises the work of district nurses and nurses of specialised rooms, monitors the condition of medical documentation, and ensures the timely supply of medications and materials to the department.
3. **District (area) nurse** — works closely with a district physician (general practitioner) and provides nursing care to the population in a defined catchment area. This is the most numerous and practically significant category of nursing staff in a polyclinic.
4. **Nurse of a specialised room** — works in a specialised cabinet (e.g., dressing room, injection room, vaccination room, physiotherapy room, ECG room). Her duties are determined by the specific functions of the room.
5. **Nurse of the preventive examination room** — performs screening examinations, measures height, weight, blood pressure, visual acuity, and records the results in the patient's medical record.
6. **School and preschool nurse** — provides nursing care and preventive measures in educational institutions attached to the polyclinic.

Duties of a District Nurse

The district nurse plays a key role in the primary healthcare system. Her duties include a wide range of organisational, diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive tasks.

Organisational duties:

- Receiving patients and preparing them for examination by the district physician.
- Maintaining patient registration, scheduling appointments, and organising home visits.
- Keeping medical records: filling in outpatient cards, registering referrals to specialists, and maintaining statistical reports.
- Organising the work of the doctor's office: preparing instruments, ensuring cleanliness and order, and maintaining the supply of medications and consumables.

Clinical duties:

- Measuring and recording the patient's vital signs: body temperature, blood pressure, pulse rate, respiratory rate, height, and weight.
- Performing phlebotomy (blood sampling) for laboratory tests, collecting urine, sputum, and other biological material for analysis.
- Administering injections (intramuscular, subcutaneous, intravenous) and performing vaccinations according to the immunisation schedule.
- Applying dressings for minor wounds and providing basic wound care.
- Performing electrocardiography (ECG) recording when ordered by the physician.
- Assisting the physician during medical examinations and minor surgical procedures.

Preventive duties:

- Conducting dispensary work: identifying patients who require regular monitoring (chronic disease patients, war veterans, pregnant women, children) and maintaining a register of dispensary patients.
- Scheduling and conducting preventive examinations at established intervals.
- Implementing vaccination programmes: informing patients about upcoming vaccinations, checking for contraindications, administering vaccines, and recording immunisation data in the appropriate registers.
- Conducting health education work: advising patients on healthy lifestyle, nutrition, hygiene, prevention of infectious and non-communicable diseases, and self-care of chronic conditions.

Home visit duties:

- Visiting patients at home on the physician's request, especially for patients who are unable to attend the polyclinic (elderly, bedridden, post-surgical, and acute illness patients).
- Performing nursing procedures at home: injections, dressings, measuring vital signs, assessing the patient's condition, and reporting changes to the physician.
- Educating patients and family members on home care techniques, medication administration, and signs of deterioration that require urgent medical attention.

Duties of a Nurse in Specialised Rooms

Injection room nurse. The injection room is one of the busiest areas in a polyclinic. The nurse's responsibilities include: preparing medications according to the physician's prescription; administering intramuscular, subcutaneous, and intravenous injections; observing patients for 15–30 minutes after injection to monitor for allergic reactions; maintaining sterility of instruments and surfaces; and proper disposal of used syringes and medical waste in accordance with sanitary regulations. The nurse must know the contraindications and possible side effects of administered medications and be prepared to provide first aid in case of anaphylactic shock.

Dressing room nurse. The dressing room is used for surgical and post-surgical care. The nurse's duties include: preparing and sterilising instruments and materials; assisting the physician during minor surgical procedures (removal of sutures, drainage, debridement of wounds); applying and changing sterile dressings; monitoring wound healing and reporting signs of infection to the physician; and maintaining strict aseptic technique at all times.

Vaccination room nurse. Responsible for the storage, handling, and administration of vaccines. The nurse maintains the cold chain (temperature monitoring of refrigerators where vaccines are stored), checks the expiration dates and integrity of vaccine vials, screens patients for contraindications before vaccination, administers vaccines by the appropriate route, and records

each vaccination in the medical record and the vaccination register. The nurse observes vaccinated patients for at least 30 minutes after the procedure and is trained to recognise and manage adverse reactions.

Physiotherapy room nurse. Operates physiotherapy equipment (electrotherapy, phototherapy, ultrasound therapy, magnetotherapy, inhalation therapy). The nurse explains the procedure to the patient, sets the appropriate parameters according to the physician's prescription, monitors the patient's condition during treatment, and maintains the equipment in working order. Contraindications must be checked before each session.

Infection Control and Safety

All nursing staff in a polyclinic must strictly follow infection control protocols to protect both patients and personnel. Key requirements include:

- Hand hygiene before and after each patient contact, after contact with body fluids, and after removing gloves.
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE): gloves, masks, and protective aprons when there is a risk of exposure to blood or body fluids.
- Proper handling and disposal of medical waste: sharps (needles, scalpels) must be placed in puncture-resistant containers immediately after use; other waste is sorted by category and disposed of according to regulations.
- Disinfection and sterilisation of reusable instruments following approved protocols.
- Surface disinfection of examination tables, chairs, and equipment after each patient.
- Regular medical examinations and vaccinations of nursing staff themselves (annual screening for tuberculosis, hepatitis B vaccination).

Professional Communication and Ethics

Nurses in a polyclinic interact with a wide range of people: patients of different ages and backgrounds, physicians, other nurses, and administrative staff. Effective and ethical communication is a core professional skill.

- **Patient interaction:** The nurse must greet the patient, introduce herself, explain what procedure will be performed and why, obtain the patient's consent, and answer questions in clear, non-technical language. Patients have the right to refuse any procedure, and this right must be respected.
- **Confidentiality:** All information about the patient's diagnosis, treatment, and personal circumstances is strictly confidential. It may not be disclosed to third parties without the patient's consent, except in cases specified by law (e.g., infectious diseases requiring mandatory reporting to public health authorities).
- **Team communication:** Clear and accurate reporting to the physician is essential. The nurse must be able to describe the patient's condition objectively and concisely, report any deterioration promptly, and document all observations in the medical record.
- **Professional conduct:** Nurses must maintain a neat appearance, wear clean work attire, behave respectfully toward all patients regardless of their social status, religion, or ethnicity, and avoid personal judgements or emotional reactions in difficult situations.

Key Vocabulary for Professional Communication

Term	Meaning / Context
Outpatient card / medical record	Document containing the patient's medical history and current information.
Catchment area	The geographical area served by a particular polyclinic or district.
Dispensary observation	Regular monitoring of patients with chronic diseases or risk factors.
Vital signs	Temperature, pulse, respiration rate, and blood pressure.
Phlebotomy	The procedure of drawing blood from a vein for laboratory analysis.
Aseptic technique	Methods used to prevent contamination by microorganisms.
Cold chain	The system for maintaining vaccines at the required temperature from production to administration.
Contraindication	A condition or factor that makes a treatment or procedure inadvisable.
Anaphylactic shock	A severe, life-threatening allergic reaction requiring immediate treatment.
Medical waste	Waste generated in healthcare facilities that may be infectious or hazardous.
Informed consent	The patient's agreement to a procedure after being fully informed of its purpose, risks, and alternatives.
Health education	Providing information and advice to patients and the public about healthy lifestyle and disease prevention.