



ASK BEFORE THE TASK

(A PRINCIPLE OF PATIENT CENTRED CARE)

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Abstract

Getting informed consent and giving patients thorough explanations before beginning any procedure are essential parts of patient-centred care in nursing practice. This article examines the importance of obtaining agreement from patients and making sure they are aware of the purpose of the procedure before it is performed. This strategy fosters trust increases patient autonomy and enhances overall healthcare results. Additionally, it reflects the fundamental values of respecting the rights and dignity of patients and is in line with legal and ethical norms.

Key words: Patient consent, nursing practice, patient centred care, patient autonomy, nursing strategy

I. Introduction

Nursing care is centred around the patient's well-being, and a key element of this care involves gaining the patient's trust and cooperation. One of the simplest yet most powerful ways to achieve this is by asking for consent and providing an explanation before performing any nursing task—no matter how routine or minor it may seem.

The phrase "Ask before the task" serves as a reminder to nurses that each procedure should begin with a conversation with the patient. Informed consent is not only a legal requirement but also an ethical imperative. It allows patients to exercise autonomy over their own bodies and care. For nurses, it demonstrates respect for the patient's rights, promotes transparency, and improves patient-nurse relationships. This article highlights the importance of asking for consent and providing an explanation before conducting a task, exploring its ethical, psychological, and practical benefits.

II. Why "Asking before any task" is important?

1. Respect for Patient Autonomy

The term "patient autonomy" describes a person's right to make their own healthcare decisions. By requesting consent, nurses respect this ideal by granting patients authority over their own health¹. Patients are free to accept or reject any procedure or treatment, regardless of the prescription.

• For instance, a nurse should describe the goal, the process, and any potential side effects to the patient before giving an injection. This guarantees that the patient is aware of what is going to happen and gives them a chance to voice any worries or queries.

2. Building patient's trust and confidence

Patients frequently find themselves in precarious circumstances, especially in clinical or hospital settings where they might not completely comprehend medical procedures. Before a task, giving a patient an explanation helps them feel safer by lowering their level of doubt and worry. Because patients prefer to be treated as active participants in their care rather than passive recipients, this communication builds trust between the nurse and the patient².

For example, a patient is more likely to feel comfortable and comprehend the necessity of a catheterisation procedure when the nurse explains the steps involved. In addition to educating the patient, this explanation gives them confidence that the nurse is capable and concerned about their comfort.

3. Enhancing Patient Comfort

Patients who understand the rationale behind a task are more likely to cooperate. A clear explanation and consent process can lead to smoother, quicker procedures because the patient is less likely to resist or become anxious.

In a study on patient compliance with wound care, patients who were given a thorough explanation of the process in advance showed greater cooperation and expressed greater satisfaction with their treatment than those who were not given explanation³.

III. Practical applications

The “May I” & “Thank you” concept

Make it a mandate to ask permission (“May I”) before performing any tasks

There are instances where nurses perform tasks without asking permission from the patient. Following are some illustrations of Asking consent from patient before any task.

Scenarios	With out asking permission from patient	<u>The “May I” & “Thank you” concept</u>
To check the patient's BP	Went to the patient's bedside and started tying the BP cuff without telling anything to the patient	Go to the patient bedside and inform “Sir/madam, May I check your BP” After obtaining his / her ok proceed. Post - checking the BP say “ Thank you Sir/Madam”
Repositioning the patient	Went to the patient's bed side and started repositioning the patient without any conversation	Go to the patient and say” Sir/madam it is time to change your position to avoid any pressure sores, May I? ” After obtaining his / her permission proceeds. Post - repositioning, say “ Thank you ; Sir/Madam”
Administering IV medication	Went to the patient's bedside and started connecting the IV line to the cannula without making any conversation with the patient	Go to the patient and say” Sir/madam, I am going to connect the IV line. May I? "After obtaining his/ her consent proceeds. Post connection say “ Thank you sir/Madam”
Taking away medicine from patient's drawer	Went to the patient's room and took something from his / her drawer and walks away without asking for permission	Go to the patient's room and ask for permission “Sir/ madam May I take this medicine as I need to replace this with xxxx as advised by the doctor” After obtaining his/ her Ok proceed. Then say “ Thank you Sir/Madam”
Taking blood sample	Going to the patient's bedside and holds her/ his hand and	Go to the patient's bedside and inform him/her “Sir/ madam I am going to take your blood sample for xxxx test.... May I? After obtaining permission

	started tying the tourniquet without asking for permission	proceed. After taking the sample say “Thank you Sir/ Madam”
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IV. Challenges and Barriers for Ask before the task

1.Time Constraints

In fast-paced settings like emergency rooms or ICUs, the time constraints can make obtaining consent difficult. Nurses may feel rushed and assume that patients will understand or agree to procedures without full explanations.

Solution: Even in urgent situations, a concise and clear explanation should be provided. For example, saying, "I need to insert an IV for quick medication. It will feel like a small pinch, and I'll ensure you are as comfortable as possible."

2. Patient Conditions

Some patients may be unable to give consent due to cognitive issues, unconsciousness, or severe stress. In these situations, nurses must rely on surrogate decision-makers or follow advance directives.

- Solution: When patients are incapable of consenting, nurses should involve family members or legal representatives in the process and respect any medical directives provided.

V. The Role of Communication in Nursing Education

In nursing education, communication skills must be prioritized as a fundamental part of patient care. The practice of “Ask before the task” should be instilled in students early on to highlight the significance of obtaining patient consent and providing clear explanations. Using simulations, role-playing, and hands-on scenarios are effective ways to teach these skills.

Example in Education: Nursing curricula should include patient-centred care modules that emphasize the legal, ethical, and emotional dimensions of informed consent. This ensures graduates are equipped to practice with empathy and professionalism.

VI. Conclusion

The "Ask before the task" principle reinforces patient autonomy, trust, and communication in nursing. Seeking consent and offering clear information helps nurses promote patient comfort, improve health outcomes, and meet ethical and legal obligations. This approach strengthens the nurse-patient bond, contributing to a more caring and effective healthcare system.

Further research in nursing should investigate the effects of communication and patient consent on outcomes, especially in high-pressure settings like emergency rooms. Additionally, developing and testing strategies to enhance communication between healthcare workers and patients could improve adherence to this essential practice

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1.

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