JOB DESCRIPTION

HEALTH CARE ASSISTANT (HCA)

REPORTS TO: Clinical Nurse Manager

ACCOUNTABLE TO: Director of Nursing

ROLE DESCRIPTION:

Patients require assistance in some or all activities of daily living. It is the duty of the nurse to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the care required by the patient. The primary role of the Health Care Assistant (HCA) is to assist the nurse in the implementation of the care plan as determined by the registered nurse.

The role involves collaborating with the nursing staff, in assisting patients with the activities of daily living, and collaborating with all members of ward staff in creating an efficient, safe and friendly environment for care delivery. The HCA has been trained in the taking and recording of the patients observations i.e. blood pressure, pulse, temperature and respirations, testing patients urine specimens and the measurement and application of anti-embolic stockings e.g. TEDs.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

HCA’s are accountable for their actions in the delivery of patient care for which they have been trained and must not undertake any duty for which they are not trained. If HCA’s feel that certain requests are beyond their capabilities, they should make this known to the person(s) making the request.

EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS:

The recognised qualification for Health Care Assistants is the FETAC (NCVA Level 5) Health Care Support Certificate. All newly recruited Health Care Assistants must possess this qualification.

PERSONAL CONDUCT:

HCA’s should conduct themselves in a manner that conveys respect of the individual and ensures safe patient care. The personal characteristics that indicate these principles include:

Confidentiality
At all times, maintain patient’s confidentiality.

Courtesy
Be courteous in all dealings with patients, colleagues and visitors.

Accountability
Take responsibility for own actions.
Communication
Respond to patients, colleagues and visitors appropriately, record all information accurately and report all relevant information. Be able to work as a team member.

Hygiene Standards/Infection Prevention & Control
Read the Infection Control policies and ask your manager to explain parts that you may not understand. Deliver a high standard of patient care. Be vigilant in ensuring that a high level of hygiene and cleanliness is maintained. Practice hand hygiene according to hospital policy.

Dignity and Privacy
All patients are entitled to have their dignity and privacy maintained as much as is possible in the hospital setting. Ensure practice is reflective of this.

Health and Safety
Know and understand the Health and Safety regulations and apply them in the workplace.

DUTIES:
The HCA’s role will involve some of the following activities, along with others that may be necessary in the context of specific ward situations.

Maintaining a Safe Environment:
The HCA will participate in maintaining a safe environment for patients, visitors and staff, by maintaining vigilance to identify potential hazards, and by taking the necessary steps to remove the hazards.

These steps will include:
- Ensure all practices adhere to the Infection Control and Prevention Policy
- Assist in keeping all ward or unit areas clean and tidy
- Move or assist in moving equipment and furniture as necessary
- Washing and making up unoccupied beds when necessary
- Returning trays and equipment to proper storage areas
- Attending to the hygiene of equipment such as IV stands, infusion pumps, hoists, bed cages, patient chairs, commodes and other ward equipment
- Attend to spillages, when necessary, as quickly as possible to prevent accidents
- Assist in the disposal of clinical waste according to Hospital policy
- Carefully dismantle clean procedure trolleys after their use
- Assist mobile, but disorientated, patients to navigate safely around the ward
- Assist feeble visitors on the ward to prevent them falling or injuring themselves
- Escort / transport patients within or outside the hospital when necessary
- Remain with patients who require custodial supervision
- Prepare ward and bed areas for the reception of new patients
- Assist with the safekeeping of patient’s personal property in conjunction with the nursing staff
- Report broken or unsafe items that need repair
- Carry out errands
Communicating:

Communication skills will be used to provide a caring service to patients, colleagues and the public in a courteous and effective manner.

HCA’s will:

- Treat everyone in a manner in which they themselves would like to be treated
- Operate in accordance with the values of the Hospital. These values include integrity and openness, respect and support, caring, commitment and loyalty to the organisation
- Demonstrate a range of listening skills appropriate to the context of different patient, visitor and ward situations
- Contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the ward by communicating openly with the nursing staff about patients’ and relatives’ needs
- Use a range of communication methods to exchange information with the nursing staff
- Participate in constructing a physical environment that communicates peace, comfort and caring to patients and their families
- Direct all enquiries about a patient’s condition to a member of the nursing staff. This includes both telephone and verbal inquiries

HCA’s have important obligations in relation to maintaining confidentiality. This applies to information accessed through interactions with patients and their relatives or through interactions with other ward staff. However, there is also an obligation to report to the staff nurse, or other relevant authority, any information that may indicate the potential of harm occurring to any person.

Breathing:

The HCA will assist staff nurses in maintaining patients’ adequate breathing.

They will:

- Recognise signs of distressed breathing in patients and report these to the nursing staff
- Assist with positioning the patient to make breathing easier and more effective
- Locate and bring oxygen supplying equipment to the bedside as directed by the nursing staff
- Help patients conserve their oxygen supply and reduce their demands for oxygen by positioning personal items such as drinks, tissues and reading materials within easy reach of the patient
- Maintain the ward in a well-ventilated condition and in the condition perceived by the patient as being most comfortable
- Maintain a calming and relaxing atmosphere for the patient

Eating and Drinking:
The HCA has a significant contribution to make in helping patients meet their needs for food and drink.

Under the direction of the nursing staff they will:

- Prepare patients to enjoy their meals as much as possible (for example by offering mouth washes or opportunities to clean teeth or dentures, to use toilet facilities and to wash their hands as appropriate)
- Prepare the eating environment by making it as aesthetically pleasant as possible by removing unnecessary items from the immediate bedside (commodes, urinals and sputum cartons, for example)
- Feed or help to feed patients as directed
- Assist patients with cutting or arranging their food so it can be easily eaten
- Observe the amounts of food and liquids consumed by patients who need special monitoring in this area and document appropriately
- Making patients comfortable after their meals (for example, repositioning them for a nap, offering opportunities to clean their teeth or dentures)
- Encouraging patients to drink plenty of fluid and making this possible by offering refreshing drinks frequently

**Eliminating:**

Eliminating waste from the body is an essential process for all living beings. It is a function of nursing to assist people in this area of living when they need such assistance and the HCA will also offer assistance in this area.

They will:

- Supervise patients in toilets and bathrooms when this is necessary
- Place patients on bedpans or commodes or assist nurses in doing this and ensure that patients are not left in this position longer than necessary
- Attend to patients’ post elimination hygiene needs
- Assist with the care of incontinent patients
- Measure and record volume of urine eliminated by patients when this is a concern and as directed by the nursing staff
- Empty urinals recording volumes when directed
- Emptying urine drainage bags and recording volumes
- Emptying colostomy bags and other drainage bags as directed by the nursing staff
- Disposing of used sputum containers
- Taking care of clothing belonging to patients which may become soiled
- The HCA will strictly adhere to the universal precautions identified in the infection control policy document so as to prevent spread of infection when dealing with human waste products

**Personal cleansing and dressing:**

HCA’s contribute to patients’ comfort and maintenance of personal dignity by assisting them, when necessary, with personal cleansing and dressing activities.
These may include:

- Washing patients in bed, shower or bath and observing and reporting the condition of patients skin
- Helping with, or performing mouth care
- Shaving patients when necessary
- Caring for patients’ hair and nails as needed
- Helping patients to dress and groom

**Controlling body temperature:**

Peoples’ comfort and indeed survival depend on their body temperature being maintained within a normal range.

The HCA will contribute to this important function in the following ways:

- By offering extra blankets or removing them as requested by the patient or by the nurse charged with the care of the patient
- By providing other warming equipment as directed by the nurse
- Taking and recording patients temperature as directed by the nurse

**Mobilising:**

HCA’s will help patients to maintain or regain their independence by assisting them to mobilise in the following ways:

- Assist patients with walking when this is appropriate
- Position patients comfortably and in a manner that enables mobility either in bed or on a chair
- Assist with turning and positioning patients in bed
- Provide patients with aids that enhance opportunities for mobility in consultation with the nursing staff
- Participate in moving patients as directed by the nursing staff and according to correct procedures which aim to prevent injury to all parties involved
- Report all falls, or other untoward events, experienced by patients to the nursing staff

**Death and Dying:**

Addressing issues relating to death and dying constitutes an important part of the HCA’s role.

This may include:

- Establishing a quiet, comfortable and dignified environment for the dying person and family members to share
- Listening with respect and with empathy to relatives who may wish to chat
- Providing comforting and refreshing drinks or snacks for relatives who may be spending long periods both day or night with their dying family member
Providing comfort measures for the dying person as directed by the nursing staff. These may include frequent small sips of fluid, sponging of a warm forehead, adjusting pillows and bedclothes

Assisting with the preparation of the body for it’s removal to the mortuary

Organisation of the dead person’s belongings for their return to the family

Collaboration in other ward activities including:

The taking and recording of patients observations as directed by the nurse, and reporting abnormalities

Assisting the nurse in the provision of quality nursing service

Accepting guidance and assisting the nurse in duties associated with the delivery of care and management of the ward/healthcare environment and other support duties as appropriate

Assisting in creating a safe environment for patients, colleagues and visitors

Checking ward stocks and listing those that need re-ordering

Maintaining orderly storage of supplies

Reporting to the nursing staff any requests from patients or relatives

Reporting to the nursing staff any complaints of pain, distress etc. expressed by patients

Undertaking training and development of further skills as directed by the Director of Nursing

The HCA must report to and work under the supervision and direction of the nursing staff in relation to all duties / tasks

Nursing staff will allocate duties in accordance with their professional judgement and the HCA’s competence as determined by the registered nurse

The nursing staff must not allocate any duty to the HCA for which he/she has not been trained

The above list is not intended to be an exhaustive list of duties and will be subject to review in light of changing circumstances

I have read the above job description. I confirm that I clearly understand and agree to adhere/comply with the job description.

SIGNED: ______________________________________ DATE: __________________

Employee