

Collaboration Café: Reflecting on Situational Awareness in Nursing Practice

Situational awareness is defined by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ, nd) as “the degree to which one’s perception of a situation matches reality” (para, 1). Situational awareness can include awareness of patient status, prioritizing care, environmental threats to safety, and fatigue or stress. A lack of situational awareness can result in serious safety events and add to crisis.

Share your experience and perspective in answering the following questions:

- Describe a time in your nursing practice when you were involved in or witnessed an error or a near-miss.
- How could situational awareness have prevented this situation?
- What pattern of knowing (empirical, ethical, personal, or aesthetic knowledge) applies to situational awareness?

Answer:

Reflecting on Situational Awareness in Nursing Practice

In my nursing experience, I once witnessed a concerning incident in which a nurse administered medication to a patient who was known to be allergic to a specific drug. The potential consequences of this error were grave, but fortunately, it was caught before it could cause significant harm. This incident underscored the crucial role of situational awareness in nursing practice, a lesson that we all must take to heart.

How could situational awareness have prevented this situation?

Situational awareness could have played a pivotal role in preventing this error. The nurse could have avoided administering the medication altogether by maintaining a heightened awareness of the patient's allergy status. This situation underscores the importance of continually monitoring and verifying patient information, prioritizing safety, and being mindful of environmental factors such as potential distractions that might compromise one's focus.

What pattern of knowing applies to situational awareness?

In this context, empirical knowledge is most relevant to situational