

OBJECTIVES:

- To have a basic knowledge of the principles of patient privacy and confidentiality
- To get familiar with English words related to the medical field
- To be able to practice in explaining and expressing ideas

Today's Vocabulary and Idioms

- **privacy:** the right to make personal decisions
- **confidentiality:** not to be disclosed; secrecy
- **safeguard:** to protect; ensure safety
- **ethical and legal obligation:** acceptable standards of conduct or actions
- **challenging:** difficult; demanding

Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality are basic rights in our society. Every nurse understands and respects the need for patient confidentiality. Our patient's health record serves as the instrument of care. Nurses, physicians, and all who provide care, are entrusted with the patient's health information solely to be of service to that patient. As professionals, our connection to our patients and our colleagues depends on it. It is our duty to protect the well-being of those who are entrusted to our care. Safeguarding those rights, with respect to an individual's personal health information, is our ethical and legal obligation as health care providers. Doing so in today's health care environment is increasingly challenging.

Share Your Ideas:

- **Why should healthcare providers respect patient privacy and confidentiality?**

Test Your Confidentiality Awareness:

1. A patient named Andrea has just completed his procedure and is wheeled into the recovery area. The nurse comes to talk with Andrea about the procedure and to discuss discharge plans. There are other patients around them and a closed privacy curtain only separates them.

Question: Should the nurse have this discussion with the patient in the recovery room? Why?

2. An environmental worker is scrubbing the floor in a semi-private room when the nurse comes in to talk to a patient about discharge plans. The environmental worker overhears the nurse even though the curtain was pulled around for privacy. The worker recognizes the patient as a teacher at her son's school. She hears the nurse tell him he has cancer and only weeks to live. The worker feels very badly and wants to tell her son and husband.

Question: What should the environmental worker do? What are the risks here?

3. You are an orthopedic nurse at your hospital. Your spouse is here as an inpatient following exploratory surgery. You finish your work and go up to your spouse's room to visit. Your spouse has not awakened from the procedure at this point. You go out to the nurses' station and pull the chart.

Question: Is this allowed because you are her spouse and you practice at this hospital? Why?