

# Reflection

*by Nurse Imperial*

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**Reflection (Option 2): Navigating Uncertainty in Patient Care**

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### **Reflection (Option 2): Navigating Uncertainty in Patient Care**

Reflective practice plays a critical role in a nurse's career. For example, reflection allows nurses to learn from clinical events, whether positive or negative, and adapt their practice based on the lessons learned (Barchard, 2022). In this paper, I will be reflection on a challenging clinical situation I encountered in the past week. While I questioned my confidence and decision-making abilities, the experience provided essential insights on areas for improvement when facing a similar situation in the future.

The encounter involved a 35-year-old patient (J.P.) who was admitted to the psychiatric unit for severe depression and suicidal ideation. J.P. had a history of multiple hospitalizations, with medication history revealing past non-compliance with treatment. I had been assigned to monitor him during my shift. At some point during the shift, I noticed that J.P.'s mood had significantly deteriorated. He had become increasingly calm, insisted that he was feeling well and, did not need to attend the group therapy session. Initially, I tried to encourage him to participate in the therapy, but my suggestions did not yield any positive effect. I felt unsure about what I should do but finally settled on respecting his preference of not attending the session. I left him and went to the washrooms for only a few minutes only to find him trying to jam a pen in his neck.

I immediately alerted the crisis intervention team because I realized the incident could have led to a suicide within the unit. At that moment, I started questioning my decision-making about my capacity to maintain the safety of patients with suicidal ideations. I had an overwhelming sense of guilt because I believed I had not taken adequate measures to keep J.P. safe. I feared that the incident might affect my confidence and capacity to handle similar situations in the future. The incident weighed heavily on me and created doubts about my

competence as a mental health nurse. However, the nurse manager was supportive and reassured me that such scenarios where nurses have to balance between patient autonomy and beneficence occur often. I acknowledged that the complexity of J.P. case and the ethical dilemma had significantly affected my decision-making.

Although the incident brought doubts about my competence in decision-making, it also provided lessons that would inform my future practice. Faced with a similar situation, I would collaborate with the interprofessional team to address the patient's needs collectively. As supported by Grant and Lusk (2019), the approach facilitates fluids assessments and resolution of ethical dilemmas in suicide prevention. In addition, the experience enhanced my understanding that a sudden calmness may indicate deterioration in patients with suicidal thoughts. Therefore, such a situation in the future would prompt me to be more assertive and insist on the benefits of interventions for patients. In addition, I would involve one or more team members in convincing a patient to adhere to the recommended interventions without being over-imposing or patronizing. I believe the strategies would help balance the ethical principles of autonomy and beneficence.

## References

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# Reflection

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