Background. This study is a contribution to the project, Ethical Caring Cultures. The project is collaboration between Åbo Akademi University and Vasa Central Hospital and its purpose is to develop an ethical lasting caring culture. Former research about how leadership influences the ethical foundation has not been identified. The study is based on a hermeneutical foundation and on a theoretical perspective of caring science. The basis of the theoretical perspective is the tradition of caring science that was developed at the Department of Caring Science at Åbo Akademi University. According to this tradition Ethos gives the ultimate purpose to the caring context and the ground motive is the motive of Caritas.

Aim. The aim of the study is to make the role of the nursing manager visible in the context of implementing the ethical foundation in the patient care. The main questions of this study are: 1. Which ethical fundamental values are kept alive by a nursing manager? 2. What is the role of a nursing manager in the application of the fundamental values in practice?

Method. The material was collected by conducting qualitative interviews with five head nurses at Vasa Central Hospital. The material was analyzed with qualitative content analysis, with an inductive approach.

Results. The following themes were outstanding in the results: Values that are kept alive by a nursing manager; Values that can be affected by a nursing manager; The influence of a nursing manager on values; Difficulties of maintaining values; The management of difficult situations by a nursing manager and An ethical caring culture. The nursing manager upholds the fundamental values. These values stand out as the values which the nursing manager has the greatest influence over. The most important way to influence the values is to act as an example. There are material and human factors which may hinder the values from being fulfilled. The nursing manager takes immediate action in order to solve problems when they emerge. An ethical caring culture has a prevalent ground of values in which the patient is in the center.

Conclusion. This study provides knowledge about how a nursing manager can affect the fundamental values and the caring culture in order to develop an ethical caring culture.