The Benefit of Recharge Rooms on the Mental Health of Nurses

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Have you ever attempted to execute your job while under immense stress and anxiety? Would you want the nurses and healthcare professionals caring for your sick loved one to be working under these conditions? "In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25%, according to a scientific brief released by the World Health Organization (WHO) today" (World Health Organization, 2022). Among this 25% increase includes nurses worldwide. Caring for others on the front lines during a pandemic has had an impact on healthcare workers' mental health and well-being. The question is, what actions can be taken to alleviate this burden and subsequently improve the quality of patient care? Introducing recharge rooms in hospitals will reduce stress and burnout among nurses as a result of the pandemic. This paper will discuss the mental health effects of the pandemic on nurses, the benefits of recharge rooms, and the impact they will have on improving the quality of patient care.

Statement of the Problem

The results from a "Health Care Worker Stress Survey" observing the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, revealed that "Approximately 50% of participants reported more than a minimal level of anxiety, including 22.5% who indicated moderate to severe levels of anxiety" (Biber et. Al, 2022). According to the findings of this study, a substantial number of healthcare employees experienced sleep and work impairments as well (Biber et. Al, 2022). Another investigation has shown that almost 25% of those surveyed experienced moderate to severe depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms throughout the pandemic. (Hartevelt, 2022).

Effect on Patient Care

Patient care will be negatively impacted by the rise in anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms among nurses brought on by the pandemic. Both physical and emotional exhaustion occur as a result of situations that cause nurses to experience significant levels of stress, anxiety and depression (Colomer-Sánchez et al., 2021). This state of exhaustion can, "negatively influence nurses' perception of others' needs, rendering them less capable of understanding them and generating 'compassion fatigue'" (Colomer-Sánchez et al., 2021). Patient advocacy is one of the key responsibilities of nursing and optimal care will not be provided if anxiety hinders the nurse's ability to grasp what the client needs. Decreased perception of the client's needs will also impact patient centered care and individual health outcomes. Additionally, weariness on a physical and psychological level could impair a nurse's capacity to adjust to change and impede their ability to effectively communicate (Colomer-Sánchez et al., 2021). Effective communication is essential to minimize misunderstandings and ensure clients follow their treatment regimen. In the same way, nurses' adaptability to change is important as they work with new patients every day, each with individualized needs. The mental health effects of the pandemic must be addressed to guarantee effective communication, flexibility, and accurate assessment of patient needs.

Another potential problem stemming from the mental health impact of the pandemic is staff shortage due to the high stress environment. "… in the 18 months since the start of the pandemic almost half of the nurses had considered leaving their profession" (Hartevelt, 2022). Staffing shortage can increase nurse burnout and decrease the quality of patient care if too many patients are assigned to one nurse.

Recharge Rooms

Protecting the mental health and wellbeing of nurses is critical to ensure optimal patient care. Recharge rooms were designed at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City to create a nature inspired, multisensory space. These rooms promote relaxation, destressing, and reenergizing in just fifteen minutes. The environment entails "Using silk plants, images of landscapes and waterfalls, meditative music and diffusers that disperse calming scents of chamomile and lavender" (Zeldovich, 2021). Use of the recharge room space was requested by 219 healthcare professionals, who would then respond to a survey (Putrino et al., 2020). The average user reported a 60% reduction in stress after their first 15-minute use in the Recharge Rooms. (Putrino et al., 2020).

The multisensory environment of recharge rooms is designed to change your physiology. Using natural-looking surroundings is one method used to achieve this. "According to scientific literature, nature and green spaces positively influence physiology" (Zeldovich, 2021). Nature and green spaces work to decrease respiratory and heart rates and blood pressure, causing breathing to be slowed, which encourages an overall sense of well-being (Zeldovich, 2021). This is a quick and efficient stress relief technique. Another strategy used to promote feelings of calmness in recharge rooms is olfactory stimulation through essential oils. "Scent-related olfactory stimulation produces immediate changes in physiological parameters such as blood pressure, muscle tone, pupil dilation, skin temperature, pulse rate, and brain activity" (Choi et al., 2022). More specifically, lavender and chamomile essential oils were chosen based on research demonstrating their effectiveness in providing calming and stress-relieving effects (Putrino et al., 2020). In addition to the calming scenery and olfactory simulation, meditative music is playing in the background. Music has a significant, substantial, and essential influence on happiness,

regulating mental tension, and providing the mind relaxation (Pokharel, 2021). Overall, the multisensory stimulation collectively works together to relieve stress by reducing heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, and brain activity in participants. This will leave nurses feeling less anxious, refreshed, and energized to provide the best possible care to their clients.

Although some people may be hesitant on the implication of Recharge Rooms due to the potential risk of infection from multiple people being in one room, Mount Sinai Hospital has implemented measures to reduce this risk. Participants will be required to schedule an appointment prior to utilizing the space to ensure a minimal volume of healthcare workers at once. Additionally, all of the rooms' amenities are made of non-porous materials that can be easily sanitized after each occupancy to avoid infection (Putrino et al., 2020). The Recharge rooms are also voice-activated, "…allowing visiting healthcare workers to activate the projector to screen different natural scenes on a blank wall in the room without having to interact with screens or touch any items in the room" (Putrino et al., 2020). The transmission of illness is minimized by this feature, which reduces user contact with any surfaces. Overall, multiple measures have been implemented in Recharge Rooms to promote a safe environment and prevent the spread of infection.

Benefits on Patient Care

As the mental health effects of the pandemic on nurses continue to improve through the use of Recharge Rooms, patient care will improve simultaneously. By utilizing these multisensory rooms, the pandemic's impact on anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms will be lessened. As these consequences of the pandemic are lessened, compassion, adaptability, and communication will all increase. This will result in safer and more effective patient care.

Staffing ratios will improve by providing nurses with an outlet to decompress. As previously stated, approximately half of the nursing population have contemplated leaving their profession since the start of the pandemic (Hartevelt, 2022). Recharge Rooms would provide nurses with an opportunity to relax and feel rejuvenated before, after, or during their shift. A less tense workplace will consequently increase worker satisfaction and lower nursing burnout rates. Results from a study conducted by the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* observing the effects of COVID-19 on frontline nurses reiterates the claim that poor staffing ratios harm patient safety. "… nurses may be engaging in safety workarounds as a coping response to various constraints such as time pressures and workload associated with insufficient staff" (Andel et al., 2022). Utilizing Recharge Rooms will reduce safety workarounds and improve patient care as a result of sufficient staffing.

Conclusion

The mental health effects, including anxiety and depression, of the COVID-19 pandemic are negatively affecting nurses and decreasing the quality of patient care. Utilization of Recharge Rooms in hospitals will address this problem and alleviate the stress and burnout among nurses as a result of the pandemic. Research has shown that even during the first use of the Recharge Room, stress levels of healthcare workers were severely decreased (Hartevelt, 2022). As well as physiologically reducing the feeling of stress through use of natural scenery, olfactory stimulation, and music therapy. These aspects of the Recharge Rooms work to lower heart rate, blood pressure, brain activity and respiratory rate leading to feelings of calmness. Implementing Recharge Rooms in hospitals is just the first step in encouraging and improving prioritization of mental health of nurses and other healthcare professionals all over the country to ensure optimal patient care.

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