

Nursing Burnout and Turnover in the Emergency Department: Quality Improvement

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Quality improvement in the healthcare setting recognizes nursing processes that directly affect the care of patients and families (Quality and Safety Education for Nurses [QSEN], 2020). It is essential throughout the healthcare system that all members of the interprofessional team recognize and understand the importance of quality improvement, as every individual action of a member of the professional healthcare team may impact patient care. The ability to identify issues, learn from mistakes, interpret data, and work effectively as a professional team are all included in the guidelines established by the QSEN Institute (2020). It must be recognized and appreciated by each member of the skilled care team that every individual has value, and that all members associated with a particular patient must be effective to have a successful outcome.

In taking quality care of patients, valuable skills set by the QSEN Institute (2020) include the ability to communicate patient values and preferences, respect the diversity of human experience, remove any personal barriers or biases, and recognition of the experience from the patient's perspective of care. A quantitative study conducted in the article to be discussed focuses on improving the nurse's work environment with high rates of burnout and turnover in the emergency department (Adams et al., 2019). Burnout and high rates of turnover are a growing issue in the healthcare system throughout many departments; however, emergency departments worldwide are impacted the most. This article aims to collect data on these growing issues, implement interventions to improve overall satisfaction, and analyze whether these actions have positively impacted the nursing profession.

Article Summary

The study conducted in this article by Adams et al. (2019) presents the growing issue of burnout and turnover of nurses in emergency departments due to negative work environments and emotional exhaustion. All participation was voluntary and quantitative data was collected using a demographic questionnaire, the Anticipated Turnover Scale, and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Adams et al., 2019). The study contained an excellent variety of nurses including an equal mix of men and women, nurses with bachelor's and associate degrees, new nurses, and veteran nurses. The main goal of the research was to implement a cultural change toolkit to promote positivity and improve the nursing work environment, decreasing the amount of nurse burnout in the department (Adams et al., 2019).

Introduction

This 2019 study by Adams et al. describes a quantitative analysis of emergency department nursing burnout and turnover, derived from an overall negative work environment. It was determined that these issues happen primarily due to frustration of staffing shortage, lack of departmental appreciation, and high stress (Adams et al., 2019). The main idea of the research is to support several cost-effective interventions to promote departmental positivity and help retention of new and experienced nurses.

Overview

The findings of this study could make a positive impact not only in emergency departments across the country but in numerous other departments hospital-wide. Nurse burnout and turnover have been a growing issue in hospitals, especially due to the struggles faced during

the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years. This article's quantitative method of data collection using the Anticipated Turnover Scale and Oldenburg Burnout Inventory directly aligned with the guidelines of quality improvement set by the QSEN Institute. Guidelines set by the QSEN Institute (2020) describe direct approaches made in changing the process of care and recognizing cost-effective methods of quality improvement. Identifying departmental issues, learning from mistakes, and using the data collected to improve satisfaction with the healthcare system are all identified in the QSEN Institute and relative to the methods of this study (QSEN, 2020).

Quality Improvement

The study conducted relates nursing burnout and turnover to be related to negative work environments such as the volume of patients, staffing shortages, frustration, lack of leadership support, and emotional exhaustion (Adams et al., 2019). Cost-effective methods of quality improvement resulting from this study can promote positivity in the emergency setting, in addition to many other inpatient and outpatient facilities of the healthcare system. The study by Adams et al. (2019) resulted in the implementation of a “kudos” board, a thank you card program, increased leadership rounding, and an anonymous practice-based suggestion box. In the pre-implementation stage barriers such as staffing shortage, lack of leadership presence, and emotional support need to be addressed to uncover the root of the issue in a negative work environment. The article finds that these factors greatly contribute to poor nursing morale, causing frustration and burnout among nurses (Adams et al., 2019). During the intra-implementation stage, quality improvement begins when leadership addresses the emotional concerns of the emergency department nurses, as well as giving them the support they need to feel less emotional stress and frustration. As quality improvement has been established within the healthcare system, post-implementation may involve the long-term support of nursing staff in

which there is an outlet for them to voice concerns, seek emotional assistance, and be recognized for their contribution to involvement with patient care (Adams et al., 2019).

Implementing the cultural change toolkit identified by Adams et al. (2019) would not greatly impact the healthcare institution financially. These methods were found to be very cost-effective and easy to maintain within the department. Patient satisfaction would be improved due to the increased satisfaction of nursing staff and an overall increase in worker positivity throughout the department. Along with an increase in nurse satisfaction and appreciation comes a noticeable increase in the quality of patient care. Better nursing care decreases safety risks for both patients and nurses and decreases the amount of burnout and turnover of the healthcare team. Even on days with a high census of patients, nurses would find the work environment to be more tolerable for long-term employment.

Application to Nursing

The study discussed throughout the article greatly contributes to nursing as its recommendations for quality improvement could be applied to more than just emergency departments. Nursing burnout occurs in hospitals, clinics, and schools, covering a variety of nursing specialties. By integrating these departmental improvements, the overall morale will rise and promote a more positive work environment affecting both nurses and patient care.

Practice

In high-acuity areas such as an emergency department, increased levels of stress and workload for nurses cause worker fatigue. Over time, experienced nurses in the emergency department get burnt out leaving new nurses to feel over-stressed and helpless when these high-

acuity patients are brought in needing special interventions new nurses may not have the prior experience in. This results in poor nursing practice and less opportunity to provide that patient with the proper care. An implementation discussed in the study proposes a cultural change toolkit intended to include specific interventions to promote meaningful recognition (Adams et al., 2019). By utilizing this tool kit nurses of the department would be recognized for their efforts toward patient care, teamwork, and reliability.

Education

Nurse burnout in the emergency department shares a direct correlation with negative work environments, poor nurse morale, and decreased patient care (Adams et al., 2019). Education on ways to promote departmental positivity in the avoidance of burnout is essential in retaining quality nurses. Nursing leadership plays a large role in the prevention of departmental turnover and burnout by assuring the nursing staff is regularly checked on when the department is busy. Simple methods of preventing burnout may include ensuring staff is getting bathroom breaks, covering lunches, leadership stepping in to take patients when the department is full, and encouraging debriefing after the care of critical situations. In cases where a new nurse is unfamiliar with how to care for a specific patient's needs, nursing leadership could step in to provide education on the nursing process to prevent frustration and promote education of a new skill. This type of change could aid nurses in providing adequate care during busy days, in addition to strengthening the knowledge of new nurses to promote a positive work environment.

Research

This article does an excellent job of discussing non-expensive interventions to be implemented by the department to improve workplace morale and decrease nurse turnover. As previously stated, a great variety of nurses was studied when analyzing nurse burnout and turnover in the article. A priority for further study from a professional perspective would be to further evaluate the number of burnouts of emergency department nurses in a much larger sample size. While more than one hospital was utilized, more sufficient data could be analyzed by extensive research made up of a larger population of nurses from different emergency departments that have higher rates of burnout and turnover. The data collected from the current study of discussion stated, “There were approximately 75 nurses; of those, 55 nurses qualified as full-time, and 20 nurses qualified as part-time or *per diem* status” (Adams et al., 2019). While collecting data on a sample of 75 nurses is a great starting sample size, it would be interesting to see how the cultural change toolkit could promote positivity and changes in a much larger population of burnt-out and tired nurses.

Conclusion

Implementation of quality improvement in nursing is necessary to promote quality care of patients, further educate nursing staff, and promote a healthy working environment. Quality improvement helps healthcare workers understand unique processes, value patient care, and appreciate leadership and co-workers (QSEN, 2020). The key components of patient care as described by the QSEN institute include nursing knowledge, skills, and attitude (QSEN, 2020). A nurse’s knowledge allows them to recognize patient preferences, coordinate care, educate, and demonstrate quality care through comprehensive understanding (QSEN, 2020). Nursing skills aid

in engaging patient care, having respect for the diversity of patient experience, and providing effective treatment (QSEN, 2020). Attitude allows the nurse to see care through the eyes of the patient, to respect patient rights, and to advocate for appropriate care (QSEN, 2020). The implementation of the cultural change toolkit as discussed in the following article to help decrease the occurrence of burnout and turnover in emergency departments exemplifies all the qualities as outlined in the QSEN institute. Utilization of this tool has been shown to promote departmental morale by providing more recognition and appreciation for the efforts of patient care provided by nursing staff. As previously stated, this could greatly improve patient satisfaction and care due to the increased morale of nursing staff and worker positivity. The findings of this study recognize the value of implementing a cultural change toolkit in future nursing practice to decrease nursing burnout and turnover for emergency department nurses.

References

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