Analyze a Current Health Care Problem or Issue

Catherine Knox

Capella University

Developing a Health Care Perspective

January 2019

Author Note

Analyze a Current Health Care Problem or Issue

Sufficient nursing staff available to take care of patients has been a major difficulty in health care facilities. Shortage of nurses is a major risk to the quality health care of patients. The current nursing shortage globally challenges the availability of talented staff to meet the health needs of the future population. The patient ratio continues to increase and at the same time hospitals are having a struggle in nurse-to-patient ratio, which has left nurses in a difficult situation. The low nurse to patient ratio is producing a negative impact on care towards the patient. This paper will try to analyze this critical issue in health care, review the negative effects of a low nurse-to-patient ratio has on the outcome of care, and provide workable solutions to tackle this issue.

# Elements of the Problem

The global nursing shortage has grabbed attention in recent times. This shortage covers a limited capacity to accept elements of recruitment and retention. Factors related to hiring include academic fees and poor salaries on graduation. In addition, the factor related to retention is keeping nurses once they graduate. Moreover, the limited resources to deal with the needs of qualified nursing staff decreases the retention rates. Modern research suggests that older nurses prefer short shifts and flexible working timings. They want recognition on their work experience and more professional development opportunities. Lighter duties, new paid roles such as trainers and more autonomy are some factors that help retain these older nurses. Loss of these factors impacts negatively on their performance.

Variety of factors contribute to the short supply of nurses such as the absence of funding for places, poor course evolution and closing of nursing schools. Nurses who are not satisfied enough quit or reduce their working hours and are dissuaded from long-term work-related commitments as other option of employment have more satisfaction. Studies reveal that high patient to nurse ratio is risky for patients and increase the likelihood of medication errors and patient's falls.

# Analysis

The issue of the nursing shortage is not new, but factors contributing to it currently are different. These factors include diverse demographics, high-stress environments, and increased demand for nurses, widening career opportunities for females, job dissatisfaction, and low status. Different initiatives are taken to address this issue on the national and international level. Nevertheless, countries will keep on recruiting new nurses to fill shortage until the efforts bear fruits. Opponents fear that health care cost will be increased if the nurse to the patient will increase. Effective recruiting helps to reduce the adverse patient outcomes occurrence. Inadequate nurse staffing practices can result in poor quality patient health care. Costly and dangerous medical errors will result in high turnover among nursing staff. Hospital-acquired infections result in increasing cost by 84% to health care facilities and an increase in hospital length for 5.1 to 5.4 days. In addition death rates also increase from 4.67 % to 5.5% (Stanton, 2009).

# Available Options

Research studies have uncovered that nurse staffing is the most important factor influencing staff, patients and the outcomes of health care organizations (MacPhee, 2006). It is well documented that staffing produces an influence on preventing adverse events like pressure ulcers and falls, patient's deaths and contracting nosocomial infections. Health care leaders have to create meaningful working environments to keep skilled staff and use their satisfaction to attract staff that is more talented. Even with reduced turnover rates, it is an obvious fact that new staff will be required to replace those who reach their retirement whether nurses or another staff member.

The image of self-sacrificing nurses in an outdated one and the younger nurses can’t mold themselves into it. They will always react to the programs that will indicate the possibility of sustaining balance in their lives. Having a flexible working schedule is a definite choice, but health care facilities are offering other creative programs to reduce stress among their staff members such as free massage therapies, exercise programs, and yoga classes. Solution to this issue has been debated for many years, but study limitations have made it difficult to implement the best staffing approach.

# Solution

Health Information Technology (HIT) has the potential to provide more precise and evidence-based nurse staffing, along with expert opinions. Technology should be used for the purpose of assessing the patient's needs and proper staffing to ensure the financial viability of the healthcare facility. Understanding the economic value of nursing and promoting a model which calculates the positive financial impact effective nurse staffing can produce. HIT can be a credible solution to these staffing issues because it has the capability to trace patient needs for nursing care and real-time responsiveness of nurses to those needs (Lucero, 2011). It has the power to enhance efficiency, quality of care and reduce cost by effective data mining and business analytics (Harper, 2012).

# Conclusion

Nurses to patient ratio are crucial in the industry of healthcare, and patient outcomes are dependent on nursing staff. Nursing is no different from the other professions, having its own obstacles. Technology can play an important part in health care delivery and helps nurse managers with tools and techniques that can be operationalized (Douglas, 2011). It can be the key to improve staffing issues and gain financial outcomes. Nursing profession must continue to fight for itself, but high nurse to patient ratio is necessary to win the fight because the outcome will be in favor of patients.

# References

Douglas, M. K.-P. (2011). Standards of practice for culturally competent nursing care: 2011 update. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 22(4)*, 317-333.

Harper, E. M. (2012). Staffing based on evidence: can health information technology make it possible? *Nursing Economics, 30(5)*, 262.

Lucero, R. J. (2011). Information technology, nurse staffing, and patient needs. *Nursing Economics, 29(4)*, 189.

MacPhee, M. E. (2006). Nurse staffing and patient safety. *Canadian Nurse, 102(8)*.