

Nurses' Burnout: Causes, Consequences, and Ways of Prevention

Author's name

Institution name

Date

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### Nurses' Burnout: Causes, Consequences, and Ways of Prevention

Saving people's lives is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world. However, people who work in medical settings do not always have a possibility to get satisfaction from what they are doing. Nurses, who perform some of the most difficult duties in a variety of healthcare facilities, frequently suffer from fatigue and feel dissatisfied with their job because of burnout. There are many reasons why nurses feel this way: there may be an insufficient number of employees within a unit, working conditions may be too stressful, or hours may be too long. Whatever the causes of burnout may be, one thing is certain: they should be seriously considered and eliminated. With such an aim, interventions to help nurses overcome their exhaustion and depression are designed. Specialists in healthcare settings realize that without acting appropriately, they may lose some of the most valuable employees.

#### **The Predictors of Nurses' Burnout**

Along with investigating the specifications of burnout in various units, scholars also pay attention to analyzing the predictors of this negative process that is becoming more and more prevalent among medical workers. Queiros, Carlotto, Kaiseler, Dias, and Pereira (2013) define several types of such predictors. According to the authors, the factors like age, sex, number of years of experience, working in a managerial position, being employed in several institutions, and the level of job satisfaction are the major predictors of nurses' burnout. Moreover, there is another crucial element – the interaction between work and home (Queiros et al., 2013). Taking into consideration these data, it seems necessary to investigate the mentioned factors in order to implement burnout prevention campaigns at various hospital units.

Another essential predictor of burnout is spirituality. According to research, spirituality is a predictor of burnout following the analysis of well-being and personality. Galea (2014) mentions that nurses' moral surroundings and physical environment foster the development of burnout. The issue of work environment is deeply investigated by many specialists since it is believed to be one of the most crucial factors. One of the predictors of burnout identified by researchers is the low level of manager's encouragement and support (Hunsaker, Chen, Maughan, & Heaston, 2015). It is recommended to raise the quality of manager support in order to eliminate the possibility of nurses' burnout. Li et al. (2013) remark that environment dynamics are closely connected with burnout experiences at various levels of health care. Achieving positive work climate is required to eliminate nurses' exhaustion.

### **Burnout in Different Healthcare Units**

The most frequent reason for burnout is associated with being new to nursing profession. For yesterday's students, no matter how diligent they were in their studies and at practical assignments, starting a job is a rather stressful period that is full of new and not necessarily expected things. It is impossible to be prepared for everything, and new graduate nurses face challenges every day (Laschinger & Fida, 2014). To eliminate this kind of burnout, it is necessary for the leaders to arrange the most positive environment and provide assistance for the employees that do not have much experience yet.

While all nurses may experience job burnout, there are some departments employees of which have a higher disposition to feeling overworked. Emergency care units' nurses belong to this category. Medical workers in these departments are exposed to higher stress levels due to the specification of emergency care

(Hunsaker et al., 2015). However, with appropriate support from the units' leaders, nurses are able to cope with stressful work conditions.

The reasons for burnout among nurses working in the area of end-of-life care are also more complicated than among those employed in other units. According to Gama, Barbosa, and Vieira (2014), there is a significant difference in burnout scores when comparing the results of nurses from palliative care units and those from other units. These nurses demonstrate higher levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion and a lower level of personal accomplishment. Employees at end-of-care departments feel a stronger fear of death and find themselves less secure than nurses in other units (Gama et al., 2014). Therefore, special attention should be paid to these nurses in terms of preventing the negative impressions of work that lead to burnout.

### **The Outcomes of Burnout**

There are several serious possible results of nurses' burnout. Negative outcomes may be felt not only by nurses but also by patients and even hospital managers. The major impact on nurses is that they may lose interest in what they are doing and faith in their noble profession. Constant feeling of fatigue may have an adverse impact on nurses' personal lives and their relationships with families and other close ones. They may lose interest in life and spend all the time after work trying to relax and have some rest.

Moreover, nurses' exhaustion may affect their productivity and the way in which they communicate with patients. Being overtired, medical workers may neglect some vital signs and forget to take measurements or give patients the medicine timely. Such actions may lead to rather serious consequences, causing health deterioration in patients. This issue particularly concerns emergency care units

where every minute counts and every action is supposed to be done properly and in time in order to save people's lives.

Finally, serious financial problems may be caused to the healthcare institutions where nurses experience burnout. Dissatisfied with their job, medical workers may prefer to quit and seek for better options, which leads to substantial losses on the part of hospitals. High turnover has a disruptive impact on hospitals, intimidates the quality of care, and undermines the healthcare establishment's image. Job satisfaction is a key component of successful work, and nurses' satisfaction is much higher when they are not overwhelmed with duties or an excessive number of patients (Rosales, Labrague, & Rosales, 2013). Therefore, burnout has many detrimental outcomes that should be avoided if a hospital wants to maintain high retention and a positive image.

### **The Ways of Preventing the Negative Effects of Nurses' Burnout**

One of the most popular interventions aimed at reducing burnout is the organizational one. Such an intervention presupposes a high employee engagement and cooperation (Maslach, Leiter, & Jackson, 2012). Team building and mutual support are great methods of enhancing nurses' performance and developing a positive attitude by lower demands.

In her review article, Henry (2014) outlines several successful interventions for reducing burnout. The one suggested by Aycock and Boyle (as cited in Henry, 2014, p. 212) presupposes organizing employee assistance programs along with on-site (conference room, facility campus) and off-site (river resorts, education centers) retreats. An intervention designed by Cohen-Katz (as cited in Henry, 2014, p. 212) proposes a stress-decreasing program that is intended to improve nurses' family and work relationships, develop better approaches to self-care and relaxation, and

enhance the methods of managing difficult emotions. Hayes et al. (as cited in Henry, 2014, p. 212) suggest a mentoring program to help those nurses who enter oncology units. The intervention includes senior colleagues' sharing of experience, ambulatory retreats, and personal meetings with psychologists for newly graduated nurses.

Some interventions are designed for lengthy periods. For instance, LeBlanc et al.'s project (as cited in Henry, 2014, p. 212) presupposes a three-hour program once a month for half a year. During this intervention, nurses share their experience in various work situations and organize social support. In addition, they delineate potential challenges and come up with the way of managing them. The interventions may involve different approaches, but all of them have a common goal: they are to help nurses cope with excessive fatigue and organize the positive environment at work.

### **Conclusion**

Nurses' burnout presents one of the greatest challenges to quality health care. When a medical worker feels too tired or stressed, he or she cannot properly cope with the duties, which inevitably leads to poor performance and low levels of customer satisfaction. In order to reduce the risks presented by burnout, various interventions are suggested. With the help of such projects, it is possible to raise the nurses' spirit and belief in their profession. Arranging a positive atmosphere at work and managers' willingness to help and support their subordinates are the things that reduce turnover and help nurses deal with stressful situations.

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