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Will safe staffing in Mental Health Nursing become a reality?

A key recommendation of the Francis Inquiry (2013) was for NICE to review the evidence base for safe nurse staffing levels across care settings in England. In mental health this focused on mental health in-patient and community settings. This work was halted in June 2015 by NHS England. Mental Health Nurse Academics UK (MHNAUK) argues that mental health nurses should be concerned about this decision for a number of reasons. First, a key recommendation of the Francis Inquiry (2013) has been overruled. Second, it has directly contradicted the notion that NICE is an independent organisation. Third, the decision has been opposed by significant stakeholders including Sir Francis and patient organisations. Fourth, there appears to be no consideration of who beyond the Mental Health Taskforce would undertake this work. Fifth, in her recent letter on NHS staffing, the CNO for England has managed to confuse safe staffing in mental health areas with multidisciplinary working and skill mix, as well as devalue the skills of mental health nurses. Finally, the mental health staffing framework developed by the Mental Health Directors of Nursing Network which was published last week does nothing to allay our concerns about safe staffing in mental health.

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On behalf of MHNAUK, a collaboration of Mental Health Nursing Academics from Higher Education Institutions across the UK.