
Grace Peterson Nursing Research Colloquium

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Addressing Burnout of Neonatal Nurses and Effective Coping Strategies: An Integrative Literature Review

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Addressing Burnout of Neonatal Nurses and Effective Coping Strategies An Integrative Literature Review

Background:

Neonatal nurses care for newborns that may experience a number of problems such as being born prematurely, having birth defects, cardiac malformations, or those that develop illness shortly after birth ("What is Neonatal Nursing," n.d). Typically, the neonate period is considered the first month after birth, but neonatal nurses may care for children up to the age of two ("What is Neonatal Nursing," n.d). The nurses in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) become caregivers for the babies; as well as support for the families of the babies.

Burnout is the "response to workplace stress that results in emotional and mental exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased sense of personal accomplishment" (Braithwaite, 2008). This feeling of burnout may cause nurses to distance themselves from the NICU, change specialties, experience problems at home, or leave the bedside (Sano, 2015). Nurses have reported developing health issues such as hypertension and a decreased immune system, while others have reported developing mental health issues like depression and anger (Braithwaite, 2008). Nurses experiencing burnout can also put their patients at risk by providing a lower quality of care by cutting corners, committing errors and not recognizing them, causing infections, or simply because they are fatigued (Tawfik et al., 2017). Furthermore, burnout can lead to a shortage in staff (Tawfik et al., 2017). For these reasons, it is important to conduct an integrative review to better understand what coping strategies are effective for neonatal nurses that are experiencing burnout.



Purpose Statement:

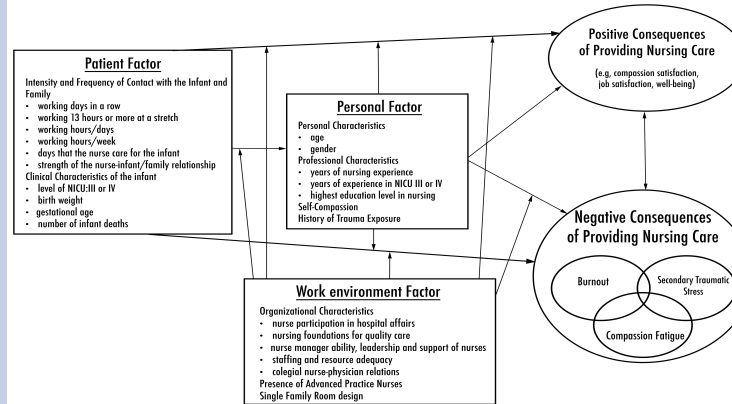
The purpose of this integrative literature review is to use current research to examine burnout in neonatal nurses and effective coping strategies that are being used.

Research Questions:

What coping strategies are effective in addressing burnout neonatal nurses?

Conceptual Framework

Model of Consequences of Providing Nursing Care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (Sano, 2015)



Riko Sano's Model of Consequences of Providing Nursing Care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit identifies five concepts in this model which are: 1) patient factor, 2) personal factor, 3) work environment factor, 4) negative consequence of providing nursing care, and 5) positive consequence of providing nursing care (Sano, 2015).

Methods:

A computerized search of the literature was conducted using PubMed and the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Health Literature Complete (CINAHL). Multiple key terms were used in different combinations when searching for articles. These terms include: neonatal nurse, neonatal nursing, burnout, and coping.

Inclusion criteria: Peer reviewed articles published in journals from 2008 to 2018 that were available in English. Articles were of the nursing or medicine discipline. Full-text versions of the articles must be available for use.

Exclusion criteria: Articles that did not pertain to the topic were excluded. Duplicate articles were also excluded. Duplicate articles were also excluded.

Electronic Databases: CINAHL & PubMed

133 Articles Eligible for review:
CINAHL: 111
PubMed: 22

51 Articles Eligible for Review after Inclusion Criteria
CINAHL: 42
PubMed: 9

50 Articles Eligible for Review after Duplications Removed:
CINAHL: 42
PubMed: 8

6 Articles Eligible for Review after Exclusion Criteria:
CINAHL: 2
PubMed: 4

Results & Discussion:

Six studies examined the relationship between coping strategies and burnout in neonatal nurses. Several strategies emerged from the literature as effective for coping with burnout.

Within the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), self-maintenance is essential to reduce symptoms of burnout. Nurses reported that a healthy lifestyle (diet, exercise, relaxing), recreational diversions and spiritual renewals were effective ways to diminish burnout. A positive environment, both social and at work, also impacts a nurse's well-being. Talking to other nurses, using humor to diffuse intense emotions, taking breaks, supportive environment (i.e. mentoring programs, support from other nurses or physicians), helps provide relief while at work. Education activities that promote professional growth and development (i.e. continuing education, involvement in professional organizations, leadership activities) helped decrease the feeling of burnout. Reflective practices include activities such as counseling, support groups, debriefing sessions, mindfulness-based stress reduction, relaxation techniques, and participation in bereavement interventions.

Nursing Practice Implications:

Nurse burnout in the NICU should be addressed in an effort to reduce the resultant negative consequences that can occur. In the NICU, neonates are completely dependent on the care provided by nurses therefore errors that result from the effects of burnout can have devastating effects. It is up to nurses, nursing administrators, and the place of employment to take the necessary steps to prevent burnout. Establishing effective coping mechanisms for dealing with burnout will help the nurses and everyone around them. Nurses should implement strategies to reduce burnout such as continuing educations, talking to colleagues, adopting a healthy lifestyle, or finding a spiritual group.