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# Combating Nursing Burnout: A Quality Improvement Project



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## Introduction:

Nursing burnout costs the health care industry roughly 14 billion dollars a year. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically increased burnout rates. Many nurses feel overworked and underappreciated; this has caused a negative impact as it is influencing the rates of burnout among hospital staffing globally. Over half a million registered nurses have already left their profession nationwide due to stress and workload (Bruyneel, Smith, Tack, & Pirson, 2021). Burnout has diminished staff, depleted resources, and decreased quality of care.

## Definition:

Nursing burnout is the state of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion cause by sustained work-related stressors such as long hours, pressures of decision making, large patient ratios, and the strain of caring for critical patients.

## Problem Statement:

Despite nursing burnout having a known negative impact on both employees and their patient's, little is known about specific resources that can help nursing staff combat this issue. Specifically, there is little data on what employers can do to help their nurses and on what nurses can do on an individual basis to help combat burnout.

# Desired Outcomes:

- There will be a 15% decrease in reported nursing burnout in hospitals receiving interventions in the next year.
- There will be a 25% decrease in negative patient outcomes related to nursing burnout in hospitals receiving interventions in the next year.
- All employers will implement at least 2 new policies to improve nurses access to resources to prevent nursing burnout within 6 months of receiving the information.

### Nurse Burnout **According to the American Nurses Association:**



nurses report inadequate staffing levels



2 in 5 units are short-staffed





 $96 \frac{out}{of} 100$ nurses report fatigue at the beginning of their shift



## Review of Literature:

A literature review was conducted examining 40 primary studies presented within the last five years. The five main focal points identified were as follows: ICU nursing burnout, nursing burnout cost, effects of nursing burnout on patient outcomes, nursing burnout related to COVID-19, and measures to prevent nursing burnout. Of the 40 studies reviewed, 23 were quantitative studies and 17 were qualitative studies. All of the studies had a common consensus that nursing burnout is a rising problem and that helpful interventions to combat burnout need to be prioritized to optimize the healthcare workforce.

A common theme among the studies was the effects of gratitude given by supervisors and patients on job satisfaction, which is a factor that can reduce the rates of burnout. As stated in one study, receiving recognition from colleagues (verbal encouragement or pay) or patients and relatives showed to lower the value of the burnout scale among the sample group (Diehl, Rieger, Letzel, Schablon, Nienhaus, Pinzon, & Dietz, 2021).

Nurses with burnout may have impaired attention and memory that decrease their recall and attention to detail. Another common theme among the studies was that burnout causes care quality to deteriorate because health care providers have more pressing emotional issues, such as exhaustion, lethargy, and depression. A study found that "each additional patient per nurse increases 30-day mortality odds by 7%" during the pandemic (Bettencourt, McHugh, Sloane, & Aiken, 2020). Another study found medical errors occur twice as more often when there were moderate to high levels of burnout (Hall, Johnson, Watt, Tsipa, & O'Connor, 2018). Health care providers experiencing burnout are often detached from their work, leaving them liable to have more agitated or aggressive attitudes towards their work. Such attitudes can harm patient care and team communication, both of which are vital to providing quality healthcare.

Hospital administration needs to monitor staff stress to allow them to better develop and implement appropriate interventions. This effort involves implementing programs, such as support wellness and resilience training. In addition to managers and supervisors taking preventable actions, nurses need to take extra precautions on their own to avoid burnout. Another common theme among the studies was that nurses must prioritize their own personal physical and mental health to avoid burnout, such as engaging in yoga, exercise, meditation, and journaling (Alexander, Rollins, Walker, Wong, & Pennings, 2017). These practices can offer physical and mental benefits to nurses and help them adapt and face adversity.

## Interventions:

- A teaching tool to identify and provide resources to combat burnout was designed.
- Main points:
- 1. Signs and symptoms of nursing burnout syndrome to promote awareness among health care providers.
- Prevention strategies such as setting boundaries, delegating, and practicing yoga.

#### What Are the Causes of Nurse Burnout?

- stress, fatigue, and poor
- Insufficient Work working in poorly managed
- can quickly experience burnout

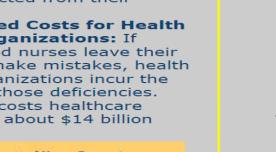
#### Common **Consequences of Nurse Burnout**

- by 2022. 70% of nurses report feeling exhausted and burnt out at some point in their career.
- Poor Quality of Care: Nurses from the workplace, experience decision-making, and become disconnected from their **Increased Costs for Health**
- Care Organizations: If exhausted nurses leave their jobs or make mistakes, health care organizations incur the costs of those deficiencies. Burnout costs healthcare agencies about \$14 billion The Impact of Nurse Burnout

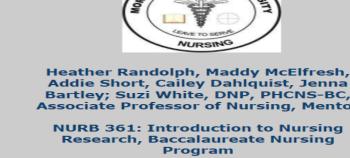


## Nursing Burnout

Combating Nursing **Burnout: A Quality** Improvement







#### What is Nursing **Burnout?**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) describes burnout as an occupational phenomenon in its international classification of diseases
- It is a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been managed It includes three main characteristics:

2. Negative feelings towards one's job

#### Dreading going to work Emotional and physical exhaustion Feeling apathetic about

Loss of sleep



### What are the signs of **Nursing Burnout?**

- Always feeling tired or
- helping others Constant dread or panic
- Loss of appetite Increased anxiety and

Registered Nurse Shortages by State, Projected



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#### Strategies to **Prevent Nursing** Burnout

working through

- Document your Journaling can help relieve stress by documenting and
- frustrations. Practice self-care: Take time to exercise, cook healthier meals, and
- improve sleep. Set boundaries: Allow time for family, hobbies, and recreation without the stressors of the workplace.
- Speak with co-workers: Other nurses may also be burnout. Express support and advice.



## Conclusion:

Burnout within the nursing field has become a progressive issue that has negative effects on both workers within health care and patient outcomes. This quality improvement project aimed to improve patient outcomes while improving mental health for nurses. A literature review of 40 studies was completed to investigate burnout among nurses. This review indicated that nurses are overworked while lacking adequate resources to prevent burnout. This issue needed to be addressed especially due to the current pandemic resulting in increased patient admission rates and high patient acuity. The quality improvement project resulted in the development of an educational tool designed to address the issue of nursing burnout among staff at a large urban teaching hospital. This tool was shared with nursing staff and placed within nurses' stations to increase awareness and provide interventions, such as delegation, exercise, and setting boundaries, to combat nursing burnout.