



Nurse Staffing and Safety of Patients

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<https://fairregisterednursepatientratio.wordpress.com/>

Background

Nurses are a key feature to the healthcare system, and they have a large impact on patient care. Their roles consist of direct patient care, assisting with activities of daily living (ADLs), medication administration, advocating for the patient, and many other tasks. As an affiliate of the patient's healthcare team, nurses spend countless hours with patients providing quality care. This leads to the discussion of the importance of adequate nurse staffing within the health care system. The focus of this study is to determine if insufficient nurse staffing is directly correlated to negative patient outcomes. Insufficient staffing increases the nurse's workload and decreases the quality of patient care. This leads to moral and ethical dilemmas for all members of the healthcare team. Research databases such as CINAHL, EBSCOhost, and PubMed were used to compile research data. Key words that were searched included, nurse staffing, patient outcomes, mortality rates and quality of care.

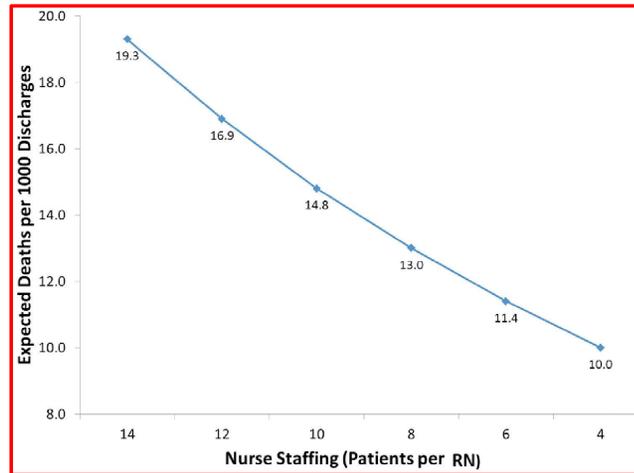
Picot Question

In hospitalized patients, how does adequate nurse staffing relate to patient outcomes, when compared to low nurse staffing, throughout their hospital stay?

Definitions

- **Advocating:** an action that speaks in favor of or supports the patient (6).
- **Insufficient staffing:** lacking an adequate number of people who work for an organization (7).
- **Mortality:** death rate (6).
- **Patient Outcomes:** results that impact an individual under medical care and treatment (7).

Figure 1. Expected Death per 1000 Discharges at Different Staffing Levels (1).



Retrieved from: <https://wageadvocates.com/michigan-hospital-patient-sues-mandatory-overtime/>

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Results

- A cross-sectional study looked at 137 hospitals in England and found nurses with 6 or less patients had a 20% lower mortality rate compared to nurses with ten or more patients (3).
- A University of Pennsylvania funded study found when a nurse has one additional patient there is a 6-9% increase in readmissions for patients with pneumonia, heart failure, and acute myocardial infarction (1).
- In the same University of Pennsylvania study, hospitals with higher labor costs were able to achieve better patient outcomes while lowering costs, due to a 40% decrease in patients admitted to the ICU units. The high labor costs were offset by the reduction in length and acuity of stay (1).
- A literature review found patients in facilities with fewer patients per nurse, were 26% more likely to die overall, and 29% of patients were more likely to die resulting from complications during hospital stays, possibly because of limited nursing time (4).
- The literature review also found each additional patient per nurse on a medical-surgical unit was associated with 5% lower odds of survival and 16% lower odds of survival for patients in hospitals with poor work environments (4).

Recommendations

- A proposition for nurse staffing would be to consider nursing time, nurse skill sets, and nurse knowledge base when staffing hospital units (4).
- Involving floor nurses in the creation of a nurse-to-patient staffing plan implemented in their specific units will improve the care provided (2).
- "Optimum nurse to patient [staffing] not only reduces the workload of nurses but also improves patient's satisfaction and quality of healthcare" (5).
- Promoting a positive environment with appropriate unit staffing will improve morale, patient experience, and cost-effectiveness (4).