**A Professional Nursing Practice Issue: Inadequate Staffing**

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A professional nursing practice issue refers to a problem or a concern that impacts the ability of a nurse to provide care that is consistent with professional standards and guidelines, thus affecting how a nurse interacts with the patients and how they care for them. A perfect example of this issue is inadequate staffing, which is the issue selected for this project. Inadequate staffing means a lack of enough nurses in a facility to care for patients, affecting the patient-nurse ratio. It is a challenging issue in nursing practice because the nurses experience burnout as they have to attend to more patients than they can handle, meaning they get little or no personal time to rejuvenate (Oshodi et al., 2019). Also, inadequate staffing means the nurses must work overtime to ensure the patients are supervised, considering they care for those visiting the hospitals and simultaneously provide home care.

Inadequate staffing affects the nursing profession as many competent nurses make many errors that could be avoided since they are overwhelmed by the workload, thus hindering nursing development as employers want them to stick in one position because they are few (Oshodi et al., 2019). Consequently, the high mortality rate is caused by inadequate staffing, as there are not enough nurses to attend to critical patients or provide the much-needed nurse-patient time each day. For instance, nurses provide first aid to patients before they are attended by a doctor, which saves lives as they are educated on what to do; hence, patients can die or bleed out without them. Many negative patient outcomes arise due to inadequate staffing, affecting the nursing profession because it cannot be advanced despite better equipment as they have to interact with patients physically. In some cases, the sick get worse, especially the elderly, who require nurses to direct them on how to take their medicine and keep them safe (Oshodi et al., 2019). The community at large gets impacted by this issue as nurses conduct rounds in the homesteads, sensitizing people on being safe from popular diseases such as obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. Thus, inadequate staffing prevents nurses from fulfilling their calling of caring for those in need without discrimination.

The “Nurse staffing levels within acute care: results of a national care survey” by Hegarty et al. talks about how nurse staffing levels affect patient safety. Increased medical error is explained as the nurse-to-bed ratio is not achieved since the nurses are few. The paper also talks about how higher morbidity and mortality are caused by inadequate staffing despite rules such as a required nurse-to-bed ratio of 1:6 as recommended by the Society for Acute Medicine (SAM) (Hegarty et al., 2022). It highlights how inadequate staffing is a big issue affecting the nursing profession. Another article explaining the issue is “Nurse Staffing, Nurses’ Prioritization, Missed Care, Quality of Nursing Care and Nurse Outcomes” by Cho et al., pinpointing how increased missed care results from inadequate staffing. The study conducted in this article showed that missed care varied with nursing activity; hence, poor patient satisfaction and quality of nursing care depended on the nursing activities (Cho et al., 2020). Thus, many nurses were unsatisfied with their jobs because they could not care for patients as they wished.

It is evident from the articles that improved patient care could only be achieved by an increase of nurses in medical facilities. Consequently, nurses sometimes opt to quit their jobs because of the burnout and the burden of bearing the outcome of patients they could have saved if only one nurse attended to fewer patients (Cho et al., 2020). I selected the issue because inadequate staffing has been the hardest professional nursing practice issue to solve, as many medical facilities hire few nurses to save money. Also, this issue is sensitive as it affects the patients and nurses because of the many errors that affect the sick or high mortality rate. In contrast, nurses are stressed out and working overtime, affecting their health. The nursing profession’s standards include professional performance, where nurses are expected to provide direct care to all patients, which is becoming difficult due to inadequate staffing; hence, nurses do not get to attend to all the sick people. In terms of the scope of nursing practice, a nurse is expected to care for everyone, including society, by providing care and sensitizing people. However, the issue of inadequate staffing hinders them from performing their duty well as they cannot cater for a large population in health facilities or in homecare services (Cho et al., 2020). Therefore, the standards and scope of professional nursing practice are affected by inadequate staffing.

References

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