

NURSE MANAGER

Boot Camp E-zine

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Improving Nurse-to-Patient Staffing Ratios as a Cost-Effective Safety Intervention

Responding to research confirming links between nurse staffing and patient outcomes, 14 states have introduced legislation to limit patient-to-nurse ratios. However, increased staffing places a considerable financial burden on hospitals. Thus, researchers studied the cost-effectiveness of various nurse staffing ratios. The study was a cost-effectiveness analysis from an institutional perspective comparing patient-to-nurse ratios ranging from 8:1 to 4:1 on medical/surgical units. Cost estimates were drawn from the medical literature and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Patient mortality and length of stay data for different ratios were based on 2 large hospital level studies. Incremental cost-effectiveness was calculated for each ratio and sensitivity and Monte Carlo analyses performed. We sought to measure costs per life saved in 2003 US dollars.

The results: Eight patients per nurse was the least expensive ratio but was associated with the highest patient mortality. Decreasing the number of patients per nurse improved mortality and increased costs, becoming progressively more costly as the ratio declined from 8:1 to 4:1. Nonetheless, the incremental cost-effectiveness did not exceed \$136,000 (95% CI \$53,000-402,000) per life saved. The model used was most sensitive to the effects of patient-to-nurse ratios on mortality. Lower ratios were most cost-effective when lower ratios shortened length of stay, and hourly wages were low. However, throughout the ranges of all these variables, the incremental cost-effectiveness of limiting the ratio to 4:1 never exceeded \$449,000 per life saved. The researchers concluded that, as a patient safety intervention, patient-to-nurse ratios of 4:1 are reasonably cost-effective and in the range of other commonly accepted interventions.

REFERENCE

Rothberg, Michael B. MD, MPH * Abraham, Ivo PhD, RN ; Lindenaue, Peter K. MD, MSc; Rose, David N. MD, "Improving Nurse to Patient Ratios as a Cost Effective Intervention," *Medical Care*. 43(8):785-791

The Impact of Fatigue on Performance

According to a recent study, American medical residents and interns work among the highest number of hours -- if not THE highest -- in the professional world. Yet, after 24 hours of wakefulness, cognitive function deteriorates to a level equivalent to having a 0.10% blood alcohol level.1 above the legal limit in most states. In 2005, the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education advocated a guideline stating that residents cannot safely work more than 80 to 88 hours per week (based on a four week average). Conducted as part of the Harvard Work Hours, Health and Safety Study, it examined the relationship between intern's work schedules and serious errors over the course of one year in the medical intensive care and coronary care units of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. The study showed that interns made substantially more errors when they worked the traditional shift (averaging 85 hours/week) compared to when they worked a redesigned schedule (averaging 65 hours/week).

REFERECE:

Landrigan, CP et al "Effects of Reducing Interns' Work Hours on Serious Medical Errors in Intensive Care Units," *NEJM* 2004, v 351, pp 1838-48.

A Positive Outlook Improves Memory

The effect of a grateful outlook on psychological and physical well-being was examined. In Studies 1 and 2, participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 3 experimental conditions (hassles, gratitude listing, and either neutral life events or social comparison); they then kept weekly (Study 1) or daily (Study 2) records of their moods, coping behaviors, health behaviors, physical symptoms, and overall life appraisals.

In a 3rd study, persons with neuromuscular disease were randomly assigned to either the gratitude condition or to a control condition.

The gratitude-outlook groups exhibited heightened well-being across several, though not all, of the outcome measures across the 3 studies, relative to the comparison groups. The effect on positive affect appeared to be the most robust finding. Results suggest that a conscious focus on blessings may have emotional and interpersonal benefits.

Reference: Emmons R.A and McCullough M.E., "Counting blessings versus burdens: an experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life," *Journal of Personality Social Psychology*;84(2):377-389. February 2003

CHAT SCHEDULE (1 hour chats)

January 10, 2008 Adjusting for an Aging Workforce 3:00 - 4:00 PM EDT

February 8, 2008 Valuing Employees 3:00 - 4:00 PM EDT

March 7, 2008 The Leadership Spirit 3:00 - 4:00 PM EDT

April 8, 2008 Determining Safe Staffing Levels 3:00 - 4:00 PM EDT

Go to <http://www.curtincalls.com/chat> and follow the instructions

The Purple Cow: a book worth reading...

This evening over dinner, a friend mentioned that someone she knew had recently visited a relative in Fort Hamilton Hughes Hospital outside Cincinnati, Ohio. And this person wasn't just anyone. This person was a nurse...and would you believe that she raved about how friendly all the personnel were, and how people went out of their way to be helpful and kind?! "And guess what else," she said. "They served the patients' food on real china and with real knives, forks and spoons...It was wonderful." Now that is worth its weight in gold. In today's hospital world it is truly remarkable!

The essence of the purple cow is that it must be remarkable...And this book is about the why, what and how of 'remarkable'! Something remarkable is worth talking about. Worth noticing. Exceptional. New. Interesting. It's a purple cow. Boring stuff is invisible. It's a brown cow.

In Purple Cow, Seth Gordon urges you to put a purple cow into everything you do to create something truly noticeable. It's a manifesto for marketers who want to create something worth marketing in the first place. This is a book about why YOU need to put a purple cow into every thing you build, why advertising on TV to mass markets alone no longer works, and why the art of marketing has changed forever. Today, people must experience your service. And if that experience isn't worth talking about...isn't remarkable...well, you know the rest!

Over the past 20 years, a quiet revolution has changed the way some people think about service. Tom Peters took the first whack at it with *The Pursuit of WOW*, a visionary book that explained why the only products with a future were those created by passionate people. Too often big institutions are scared institutions, and they work to reduce any variation, including the good stuff that happens when people who care create something special. Peppers and Rogers in *The One-to-One Future*, took a simple truth -- that it is cheaper to keep an old customer than it is to get a new one -- and articulated the entire field of customer-relations management. In *Crossing the Chasm*, Geoff Moore outlined how new products, services and ideas move through a population, and in *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell clearly articulated how information spreads throughout a population, and now Seth Gordin completes the work in *Purple Cow*. You may not think you need to convince anyone that you and your organization are remarkable, and you may be right, but nonetheless, this book has a lot to teach all of us.

Seth Gordon. 2002 . *The Purple Cow*. Portfolio Books, New York NY \$13.75