

How to measure nursing intensity and why should at all?

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Nursing intensity is described as the amount of nursing care which is needed to give safe and high class care. It is evaluated by nurses themselves through patient's care needs in relation to nurse's contribution to take care for these needs. Measuring nursing intensity is indirect because of the complexity of the environment where the nursing care delivery performs.

In Finland we have an opportunity to use national nursing intensity-instrument (PERIHOIq) to describe and monitor the nursing performance and the care needs of surgical patient in operating departments, day surgery units or post anesthesia care units. The aim of the use of this instrument is to capture the core elements of perioperative nursing, so, what nurses do related to the anesthesia and operation. The nursing intensity-instrument is a part of national patient classification system.

The point is that the frontline nurses themselves evaluate their patients' care needs in relation what they actually do to fulfil these needs using the four-scale instrument which contains six category. As a result patient attain 6-24 nursing intensity points. So, knowledge based on common beliefs became to actual knowledge. The ultimate goal in using patient classification system is to succeed in staff allocation. This will ensure the patients' appropriate care, nurses' suitable workload and organizations' cost-effective performance.

The surgical performance in Finnish hospitals is monitored extensively. Among other things, different time labels calculated from data which were documented in our electronic patient records, number of operations and utilization rates are of common interest. The staff related indicators, like sic absenteeism, turnover rates and job satisfaction illustrate the big picture from the staff's point of view. We have also statistic concerning the outcomes; patient satisfaction, pressure ulcers' incidence, pain rates, and postoperative infections. The significance of the data gathered from patients' nursing intensity is in its value to broaden the viewpoint to tell us the nurses' patient related work. It is worth notice that it is unable to explain everything the nurses do. So besides we must doubt are the nurses doing the right things?

Demand for knowledge based management makes it essential to describe and analyze our performance so it can be lead, managed or administered. We need information about our patients', staff resources and their use to support our decisions. The utilization rely on the reliability and extent of the data gathered with nursing intensity-instrument. Measuring the nursing intensity is in every nurse's professional hands.

Evidently, they need equal understanding about patients' care needs and nursing interventions. Their managers in every level must be capable to analyze and translate the information into actions. If these become true, measuring nursing intensity is worth it.