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The Effects of Nursing Overtime Work Hours on Medication Errors and Patient Safety

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Abstract

Background: The recent global pandemic has uncovered health care inequities among nursing professionals. The nursing shortage has placed pressure on overworked nurses to perform higher level critical care under dire and unsafe conditions. The stress of overworked nurses is a culprit for medical errors that affect the quality and effectiveness of patient care. **Methods:** Kennesaw State Library, PubMed, 35 articles screened. After thorough screening of various articles addressing this topic, we examined the quantitative and qualitative studies performed in all areas of nursing. **Results:** Research suggests that nurses working overtime versus full-time hours experience physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion may lead to an increase of medical errors. Events such as falls, pressure ulcers, needle-stick injuries, catheter-associated urinary infections, improper charting are all medical errors that show direct correlation to nurses who work overtime. **Conclusion:** This systematic review dives deep into the importance of establishing a culture of safety in relation to hours worked by nurses and patients hospitalized. Further study is needed to address policy and procedures to reduce medical errors by overworked nurses.

Keywords: nursing overtime, medical errors, patient safety