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Stretching to Reduce Chronic Back Pain in Nurses & Care Partners

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DO PRE- AND POST-SHIFT HUDDLE STRETCHING EXERCISES REDUCE CHRONIC LOWER BACK PAIN AMONG NURSES AND CNAS OVER A THREE- TO SIX-MONTH PERIOD?

Abstract

Many nurses and care partners develop job-related chronic lower back pain due to constantly repositioning immobile patients, changing linens, and bathing patients. These strenuous job requirements involve bending and lifting, as well as standing for extended periods of time during long shifts. This proposal will investigate the effectiveness of a targeted, thirty-second stretching session incorporated into each shift change huddle, for employees beginning their shift as well as employees ending their shift, on reports of lower back pain. Current research reveals that health problems such as back pain can cause employee injuries, disability and workers compensation claims, job dissatisfaction, negative patient experience, reduced productivity, call outs, and employee attrition. At present, there are no organized stretching or targeted exercises performed as a group before or after each shift. To ensure accurate results, we will focus on care partners and nurses who report lower back pain, and we will provide a pre-determined list of targeted exercises to be performed on an identified med-surg/telemetry unit during each shift huddle. To ascertain the effectiveness of the intervention, we will interview participants at the beginning of the study, asking them to rate their back pain on a ten-point pain scale at the conclusion of a typical shift in order to establish a benchmark. After three months of involvement in the study, the participants will again be asked to rate their back pain on a ten-point pain scale after a typical shift. This assessment will also be repeated at the six-month mark. The proposal will be considered successful if participants report a reduction from baseline of at least three points on the ten-point pain scale at the conclusion of a normal shift after six months of performing shift change huddle stretching exercises.

Key Words: *stretching, back pain, disability, healthcare workers, lifting, interventions, occupational musculoskeletal injuries*