Nursing Burnout: The Cost of Caring
Julius Penning, MSN/ED, RN, CRRN
Michael E. DeBakey VAMC
Savithri Ramanujam, Glennys Asselin, Rebecca Neri

Objectives:
1. Define and distinguish burnout and stress.
2. List primary sources of job dissatisfaction, stress and burnout among nurses.
3. Describe the personal and professional consequences of nursing burnout and its effect on patient outcomes.
4. Describe both personal strategies to manage stress and prevent burnout and strategies that institutions should implement to help prevent work-related stress and burnout among nurses.

Problem:
Sixty percent of all nurses are employed in hospital settings. Increasing demands on nursing professionals require nurses to maintain competencies in a multitude of healthcare settings especially with increasing technological advances in healthcare. Despite great opportunities in the Nursing Profession, it is difficult for facilities to recruit and retain nursing professionals. Related stressors and demands in the nursing profession are identified by nurses as factors that increase depression, anxiety, and stress.

Evidence:
In a poll on stress, depression, and anxiety, 4.11% of nurses polled identified that administration is as supportive to nurses with depression, anxiety, and stress as with other diseases and 70.06% identified that stress, depression, and anxiety are higher in the nursing profession than any other healthcare profession.

Strategy:
Identified causes of stress in the nursing profession are prominent in intensive care and emergency care settings and surprisingly for new graduate nurses. It is vital for the nursing profession to identify strategies to decrease stress, depression, and anxiety in the work setting, to develop and implement strategies to decrease stress and burnout, to improve nursing moral, decrease anxiety and depression in the nursing profession, increase retention of nursing professionals, and promote nursing as a highly desired and rewarding profession.

Practice Change:
Improve the quality of nursing mentorship for new nursing staff to promote a positive nursing culture and improve nursing retention.

Evaluation:
Evaluations from nursing staff are a key element to identifying needs of nursing staff and effectiveness of orientation or mentorship programs with seasoned nurses. Promoting a healthy nursing work environment increases nursing satisfaction, decreases stress and anxiety, and promotes the nursing profession.
Results:
Improving mentorship and orientation programs promotes increased confidence in new nursing staff, builds staff cohesiveness, decreases stress / anxiety / depression in the work environment, and promotes a healthy nursing culture.

Recommendations:
Develop leadership qualities in seasoned nursing staff to promote a healthy work environment and continue to identify and address nursing concerns in a positive environment to promote the nursing profession.

Lessons Learned:
Identifying seasoned nursing staff with excellent nursing skills in leadership qualities will improve orientation and mentorship experiences for new nursing staff to help prepare new nurses to function in the work environment and maintain a positive nursing culture.

Bibliography:
Kennedy, B.R. (2007). Preventing stress and burnout of nursing staff in LTC. (Long Term Care). Long-Term Care Interface, p 38(5).


