

“What are the implications of the 12 hour shift versus the 8 hour shift for nurses working in critical care?”

INTRODUCTION

The 12 hour shift has become a way of life for many nurses today. Nurses like the flexible working pattern giving them more days and weekends off yet evidence is growing that the 12-hour shifts are unsafe. Critical care nurses are required to be at the peak of their performance to enable them to monitor any slight changes in a patient’s state. There is twice the chance of an error occurring on a 12-hour shift than any other time (Scott, Rodgers, Hwang; & Zhang, 2006).

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF WORKING 12 -HOUR SHIFT

- Continuity of Patient Care
- Improved Documentation
- Improved Handovers
- More Flexible Work Pattern

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF WORKING 12 -HOUR SHIFT

- Fatigue
- Burnout
- Sleep Deprivation
- Greater risk of an error occurring

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Policies or guidelines stating nurses work no more than 12 hours in a 24 hour period or no more than 60 hours in a 7 day time frame.
- Emphasis on ensuring all nurse’s end their shift on time.
- Ensure nurses take their breaks.
- Quiet room when on a break for napping when working night shift.
- Being entirely relieved from their patients for the complete period of time they are on their break.
- Education to be routine around the importance of good sleep hygiene, nutrition and physical exercise.

CONCLUSION

Implications to working the 12 hour shift are associated more to the rotation of the shift rather than the length of the shift. By adapting these recommendations nurses and management can reduce the number of errors occurring and achieve optimum health and safety of both the patient and the nurse if the 12 hour shift is here to stay (Witkoski Stimpel, Sloane & Aiken, 2012).

REFERENCES

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