

12-Hour Shifts for Nurses

Can nurses work competently and reliably for the duration of a 12-hour shift?

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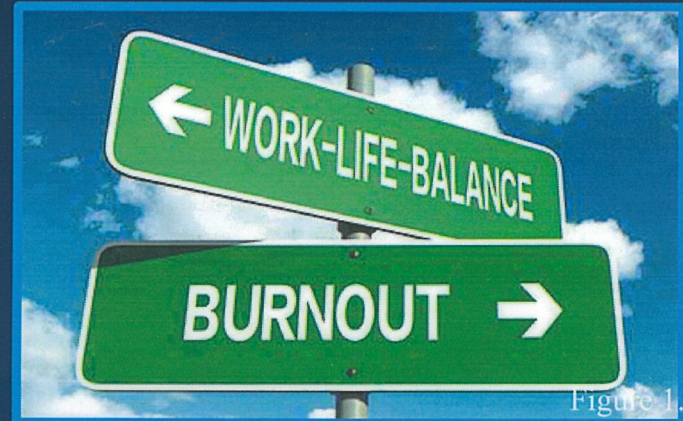


Figure 1.

Introduction

The introduction of 12 hour shifts among the nursing profession has brought both positive and negative implications to nursing care and job satisfaction. Nurses' role in the New Zealand health system has broadened overtime, giving increased responsibility and scope of practice with patient care. The extended work shifts are popular and preferred among many, as it allows a shorter working week, leaving nurses with better flexibility and work-life balance (Stimpfel, Sloane, & Aiken, 2012). Although popular – there is evidence that suggests 12-hour shifts are having a detrimental effect in 'quality of care', 'patient dissatisfaction', and 'nurse burnout'.

Pros ✓

- Fewer work days per week
- More time spent with family & leisure time
- Better continuity of care between nurse and patient
- Decreased travel/commute time
- Fewer staff shortages
- Savings on employment costs due to less overlapping of shifts
- Increased job satisfaction for younger nurses

Recommendations

1. Ensure allocated breaks are taken during shift
2. Quiet room available for breaks
3. Emphasis on nurses leaving work at completion of shift
4. Spread shifts throughout the week rather than consecutive days for nurses prone to burnout
5. Nurses to allow alternative transport post-shift if they feel too fatigued to drive safely
6. Regulations to ensure adequate time away from work, limited overtime allowed

Conclusion

Nursing practice should encompass the four domains of competence and it is imperative that nursing remains aiming for the goals of 'assessing health needs' and 'providing quality care to support people in managing their illness, and health' (Nursing Council New Zealand, 2012). From identifying the pros and cons, it is evident that the pros are mostly related to the 'convenience' of 12-hour shifts. The list of cons outlines the 'dangers' associated to both the nurses wellbeing, and the patient's wellbeing. The are ways in which 12-hour shifts can be performed safely for all involved, but requires regulations and guidelines to protect nurses from fatigue and burnout, which results in better patient outcomes. The question should not be 'are 12 hour shifts good or bad?', instead we should consider in what conditions can a 12-hour shift be operated without risks to the patients or nurses involved.

Cons ✗

- Increased patient dissatisfaction
- Nurse burnout
- 10% more likely to make a critical error (Stimpfel & Aiken, 2012)
- Acute/Chronic fatigue
- Inability to think quickly and rationally
- Sleep deprivation (average 5.5 hours per night between shifts) (Peate, 2014)
- Increased likelihood of obesity, limited exercise
- More likely to develop chronic diseases e.g. cardiovascular disease & hypertension
- Higher incidence of motor-vehicle accidents post-shift
- Increased likelihood of needle stick injury, especially in final two hours of 12-hour shift
- Job dissatisfaction for older nurses

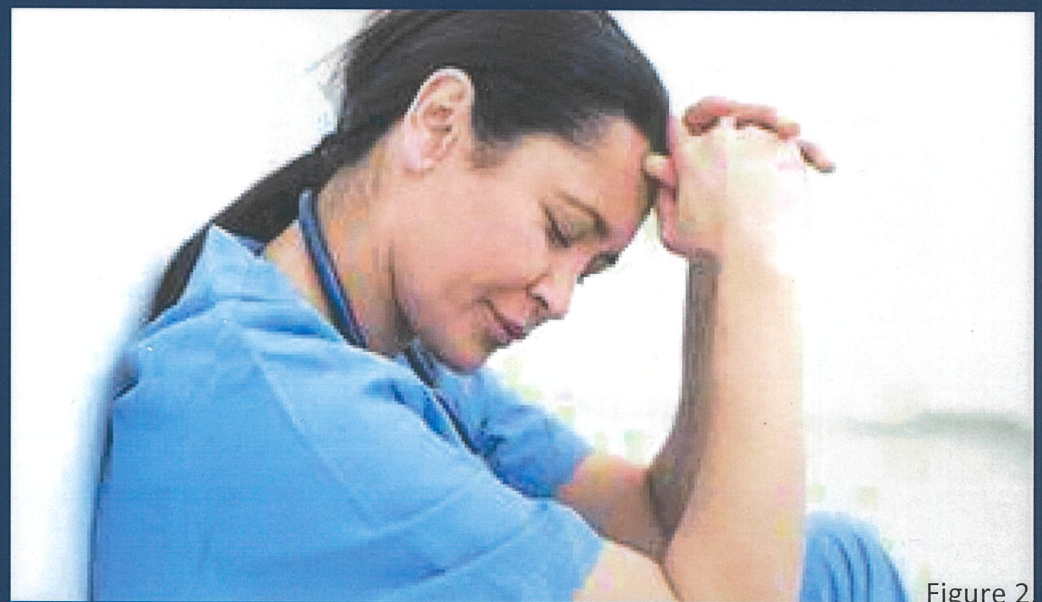


Figure 2.

References

- Nursing Council New Zealand. (2012b). *Competencies for registered nurses*. Wellington, New Zealand. Retrieved from, <http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Nurses/Scopes-of-practice/registered-nurse>
- Peate, I. (2014). Twelve-hour nursing shifts are unsafe – let's end them. *British Journal of Nursing*, 23(22), 1171.
- Stimpfel, A. W., & Aiken, L. H. (2012). Hospital Staff Nurses' Shift Length Associated with Safety and Quality of Care. *Journal of Nursing Care Quality*. Retrieved from, <http://www.nursing.upenn.edu/chopr/documents/witkoskihospitalstaff.pdf>
- Stimpfel, A. W., Sloane, D. M., & Aiken, L. H. (2012). The Longer The Shifts For Hospital Nurses, The Higher The Levels of Burnout and patient Dissatisfaction. *Health Affairs*. 31(11), 2501-2509.

Rationale

I opted to do a poster to present my literature review on the topic of 12-hour shifts among the nursing profession. I concluded that either a submission or a poster as being an appropriate median to share this information. A submission expressing my concerns could have been written to the Director of Nursing to view, however I decided that a poster would have greater impact as it is going to be viewed by a larger audience. My topic surrounding 12-hour shifts is likely to affect many of my colleagues in future, therefore I wanted them to read and learn about the pro's and con's in order to form their own opinion

Raising awareness on a topic is the first step in making a change (National Youth Network, 2000), therefore I considered a poster to be the best option for me to share evidence-based literature in a visual form. I consider myself a visual learner, and along with many other individuals; therefore, a visual coloured presentation, with the main points and logical flow has better impact on a crowd

I used the PECOT model (Jackson, 2013) to create and angle my direction and purpose of literature research. I began with the question 'Should nurses work 12 hour shifts?', however with the use of the PECOT model, I reformed my question into 'Can nurses work competently and reliably for the duration of a 12-hour shift?'.

PECOT Model (Jackson, 2013)

Population	Nurses working on wards
Exposure	Nurses working eight-hour shifts
Comparison	Nurses working 12-hour shifts
Outcome	Nurses whom work 12-hour shifts, experience more burnout and patient Dissatisfaction
Time	N/A

References

Jackson, R. (2013). *Graphic Approach to Epidemiology*. Auckland, New Zealand. Retrieved from, <https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/.../GATE%20presentation%20180213>

National Youth Network. (2000). *Raising Awareness and Educating the Public*. Youth in Action, 1(12) 1-8. Retrieved from, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/178926.pdf>

Image References – see poster on reverse

Figure 1. Ming, L. (2015). A road sign with work-life balance burnout words on sky background. Stock Photo 123RF. Retrieved from, https://www.123rf.com/photo_30348234_a-road-sign-with-work-life-balance-burnout-words-on-sky-background.html

Figure 2. University alliance. (2016). Nurse Burnout. From, Signs You're Experiencing Nurse Burnout. *Morsani College of Medicine*. Retrieved from, <http://www.usfhealthonline.com/resources/career/signs-you-are-experiencing-nurse-burnout/#.VzAVGWPwzVo>