

Impacts of 12- Hour Shifts on Nurses

“What impacts does shift duration, of nurse’s working fulltime in a hospital setting, have on nursing performance and the wellbeing of nurse’s?”

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Introduction

Twelve-hour nursing shifts have become a way of life for many nurses working in a hospital setting, largely replacing the traditional eight-hour shift (Stimpfel, Sloane, & Aiken, 2012). While nurses enjoy having a 3-day workweek, more time off for friends and family, and more flexible hours, the chance of making an error during a twelve-hour shift is three times higher than when working an eight-hour shift (Scott, Rogers, Hwang & Zhang, 2006). As a result, numerous research studies have raised the question as to whether or not twelve-hour shifts have negative impacts on a nurse’s performance and their wellbeing. It is for this reason that I have chosen to review literature on the impacts shift duration has on nurses. To aid this research I have formulated the clinical question “what

Positives of working 12-Hour Shifts:

- Higher quality patient care
- Continuity of care
- Improved documentation
- Improved handover
- Shorter work week, with a more flexible work schedule

(Stimpfelet al., 2012, Reid, Robinson & Todd, 1993, and Richardson, Dabner & Curtis, 2003)

Negatives of working 12-hour Shifts:

- Fatigue
- Sleep deprivation
- Burnout
- Increased risk of errors occurring
- Increased risk of needle-stick injuries occurring
- Increased risk of motor vehicle accident occurring
- More susceptible to musculoskeletal injury
- More susceptible to health problems (e.g. diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, depression)
- Uptake of unhealthy behaviours (e.g. caffeine, less exercising, smoking)

(Scott et al, 2006, Chen, Davis, Davis, Pan & Daraiseh, 2011, and Keller, 2009)

Recommendations For DHB’s and Managerial Staff:

- A policy or guidelines stating nurses can work a maximum of twelve-hours in a 24-hour period and no more than 60 hours in a 7-day period.
- Provide a quiet room for nurses to sleep in while on their breaks during night shifts
- Provide educational resources and sessions on the impacts of longer shifts, extra hours and not taking breaks, and ways to manage this.
- Create a taxi fund for nurses to use when too fatigued to drive home after work.

Recommendations For Nurses:

- Take regular breaks
- Avoid working overtime
- Adopt healthy sleeping behaviours
- Eat and drink adequately
- Exercise frequently
- Support other staff to do the same



Conclusion

It is clear that twelve-hour shifts have negative impacts on nursing performance and the nurse’s wellbeing. However, the longer shifts have become popular among nurses (Scott et al., 2006) and do provide some positive aspects in nursing care. By utilising the recommendations set out above, nurses and management can reduce the amount of errors, injuries and health implications occurring and instead provide care and a working environment that is safe for both the nurse and patient, if the twelve-hour shift system continues in the future.

References:

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- 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. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2011.1377.

Research Question: “What impacts does shift duration of nurse’s working full time in a hospital setting, have on nursing performance and the wellbeing of nurses?”

Table One

PICOT Category	Information relating to question	Explanation
Population	The population of my question is nurses who work fulltime, in a hospital setting.	I have chosen this as my population because nurse’s who work in a hospital setting are more likely to be exposed to longer shift durations. Plus, I have chosen fulltime nurses because I see myself working fulltime in the future so am interested to learn more about different shift options.
Intervention	Nurses who work twelve-hour shifts, and the impacts it is having on nurse’s performance and wellbeing.	I will be reviewing articles that have researched whether or not twelve-hour nursing shifts are impacting on nursing performance and the effects they have on their wellbeing.
Comparison	Nurses who work eight-hour shifts, and if the impacts on nursing performance and the nurses wellbeing differs from twelve-hour shifts.	It will be interesting to see if research shows whether the impacts on the nurse’s performance and wellbeing differs between twelve-hour and eight-hour shifts.
Outcome	The outcome of my research will let us know if twelve-hour nursing shifts are having an effect on nursing performance and the nurse’s wellbeing.	If twelve-hour shifts are affecting nursing performance and their wellbeing, we can then review what can be done to improve the circumstances.
Time	There is no time frame on this question.	Time is not necessary for this question.

Rationale for Poster:

The reason I have chosen to do a poster instead of a submission is because I feel that the impacts this clinical issue has on nurses needs to be more recognised by all nurses working in a hospital setting. I do not believe a submission would achieve this because the information would not be able to reach my entire target population. As Keller states (2009), there is a need for more resources and information around this clinical issue. As of now, nurses lack education and information around the implications of shift duration (Keller, 2009) and a poster is one effective way of educating nurses about this. Therefore, if it were to be used in real life it would be a cost-effective method to create awareness about the issue in nurses and staff (Berg, 2005). They can then take the appropriate actions, using the recommendations, to ensure their care remains safe and of a high standard no matter how long their shift is. The poster could be put up in wards where 12-hour shifts are used, and where nurses work overtime. It can easily be put up in staff rooms, the nursing office and even staff toilets, where more than one person sees and reads it (Berg, 2015). It is a very simple way of getting a message across, but can make nurses more aware of the impacts longer shift duration has, and what they can do to prevent implications from occurring.

References:

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