

THE IMPLICATIONS OF 12 HOUR SHIFTS ON NURSES AND PATIENT OUTCOMES

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Are 12 hour nursing shifts really worth it?

INTRODUCTION:

The issue of 12 hour nursing shifts have been debated in New Zealand as well as internationally. Studies have shown the 12 hour shifts can have a significant risk in nurses developing high levels of fatigue, burnout and sleep deprivation and limited ability to recover, which can ultimately lead to poor patient outcomes and declined quality of care (Geiger-Brown, Trinkoff & Rogers, 2012). To carry out this research I developed the question “**For Registered Nurses working 12 hour shifts in a hospital setting, compared to eight-hour shifts, what are the implications and risk factors on nurse and patient outcomes?**”.

POSTIVE OUTCOMES OF LITERATURE:

The literature suggests both positive and negative aspects of nurses working 12 hour shifts.

Positive features include:

- Due to there being more consecutive days off when working 12 hour shifts, work-life balance was improved, compared to working 8 hour shifts (Stimpfel, Sloane & Aiken, 2012).
- Patient care was improved as there were only two handovers per day, therefore efficient continuity of care (Farrelly, 2013).
- Nurses believed they had ample time had enough time to recover from each shift and weren't detrimentally effected by fatigue (Richardson et al, 2011).

NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF LITERATURE:

Negative features include:

- Nurses working 12 hours or more had poor patient safety and care left unfinished (Griffiths, et al, 2014).
- Nurses reported feeling fatigued and exhausted after working 12 shifts (Chen, Davis, Daraiseh, Pan, & Davis, 2013).
- Strong association with fatigue and increased risk of error, compromising patient safety (Scott et al, 2006; Griffiths et al, 2014).
- Nurses were significantly more prone to emotional exhaustion and burnout, than those working 8- hour shifts and resulted showed that shifts longer than 8 hours were significantly correlated with lack of job satisfaction (Dall'Ora, Griffiths & Ball, 2015).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Education is needed around coping mechanisms for dealing adequately with stress and fatigue so it does not lead to emotional exhaustion, burnout and sleep deprivation.
- Good sleep hygiene and enough recovery time between shifts.
- Adequate breaks on shifts.
- Appropriate 12 hour working days in a row– three consecutive working days at the most.
- Look after mental and emotional wellbeing as it is just as essential as physical health. Self-preservation is paramount.

CONCLUSION:

More research is needed in the area of how 12 hour shifts impact the well-being and performance of nurses and more evidence is needed to prove that the disadvantages caused by the risks and outcomes of long shifts outweigh the benefits (Stimpfel, et al, 2012; Chen, et al, 2014; Geiger-Brown et al, 2012). However it is still essential that nurses are aware of the risk factors that have been mentioned extensively in recent studies that have been conducted. As nurses we must advocate for gold standard practice, not only for our patients outcomes, but also for ourselves.

References:

- Chen J., Davis K., Daraiseh N., Wei Pan & Davis LS (2013). Fatigue and recovery in 12-hour dayshift hospital nurses. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 19 (1): 1-11.
- Farrelly, R. (2014). Do 12-hour shifts put patients first?. *British Journal Of Nursing*, 23(3), 189-189. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12968/bjon.2014.23.3.189>
- Geiger-Brown, J., Rogers, V., Trinkoff, A., Kane, R., Bausell, R., & Scharf, S. (2012). Sleep, Sleepiness, Fatigue, and Performance of 12-Hour-Shift Nurses. *Chronobiology International*, 29(2), 211-219. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/07420528.2011.645752>
- Griffiths, P., Dall'Ora, C., Simon, M., Ball, J., Lindqvist, R., & Rafferty, A. et al. (2014). Nurses' Shift Length and Overtime Working in 12 European Countries. *Medical Care*, 52(11), 975-981.
- Stimpfel, A., Sloane, D., & Aiken, L. (2012). The Longer The Shifts For Hospital Nurses, The Higher The Levels Of Burnout And Patient Dissatisfaction. *Health Affairs*, 31(11), 2501-2509. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2011.1377>
- Walker, L., & Clendon, J. (2015). 12-hour shifts: the debate continues. *Kai Tiaki Nursing New Zealand*, 21(5), 18-19

PECOT Category	Information relating to question	Explanation
Population	Registered Nurses working in a hospital setting, doing shift work.	Registered nurses predominantly work shifts and as I am going to be entering the nursing workforce I am interested in how I would be impacted by 12-hour shifts.
Exposure (intervention)	Looking at 12 hour shifts	I will be looking at articles that discuss the effects of 12- hour shifts and the impact of these on nurses and patients, both positive and negative.
Comparison/ Control	Nurses working 8 hour shift	The traditional length of a shift in a hospital is eight hours, therefore as part of my research I am interested in looking at how the 12- hour shift differs in the effect it has on nurses and patients.
Outcome	The purpose of looking at the outcomes of 12 hour shifts is to see whether they have more positive or negative outcomes and the impact of these on clinical practice. To see what evidence has been put forth so, if needed, practice can be improved.	Improved quality of provided care, and productivity among registered nurses. Risk of fatigue and exhaustion leading to burnout, and the impact on patients in the provision of nursing care
Time	N/A	Not a time limited event. Nurses will encounter stress and fatigue across their practice, whether they are a student or experience nurse, and I am therefore interested in looking at research that investigates the effects of shift length across the registered nurse population (Griffiths et al, 2014).

Rationale:

Health professionals have raised concern around the implications of 12 hour shifts on nurses and patient, however there is still not enough research to suggest that 12 hour shifts are detrimental and should not be utilised. Therefore I created a poster instead of a submission.

To raises awareness around 12 hour nursing shifts and the risk factors, I decided to create a poster as, a visual presentation is capturing and interesting way to get the message across. I am a visual learner, myself, so a poster is an attractive way of showing the evidence from my literature review.

I have put a lot of thought into the colours and images used as I wanted the poster to be appealing and I feel that nurses and other health professionals working 12 hour shifts need to be aware of the risk factors for them and patients, and remain healthy and well.

Reference: Schneider, Z., Whitehead, Dean. (2013). Nursing and midwifery research. Chatswood, N.S.W.: Elsevier Australia.