

Impact of Nurse Staffing on Patient Care

- A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that for each additional medical-surgical patient in a registered nurse's care, the risk of death increases by 7 percent. In hospitals with eight patients per nurse, patients have a 31 percent greater risk of dying than those in hospitals with four patients per nurse. (October 2002)
www.nursing.upenn.edu/news/detail.asp?t=2&id=23
- According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, a higher proportion of nursing care provided by RNs and a greater number of hours of care by RNs per day are associated with better outcomes for hospitalized patients. (May 2002)
<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/abstract/346/22/1715>
- In a report published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality that included 5 studies of the relationship between RN staffing and adverse effects on the patients, all 5 studies found at least some association between lower nurse staffing levels and one or more types of adverse patient outcomes. The study also found that hospital-acquired pneumonia rates are especially affected by a shortage of RNs. (March 2004)
<http://www.ahrq.gov/research/nursestaffing/nursestaff.htm#Staffing>
- The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) found that a shortage of nurses in America's hospitals is putting patient lives in danger. The report examined more than 1,600 hospital reports of patient deaths and injuries since 1996 and found that low nursing staff levels were a contributing factor in 24% of the cases. (August 2002) www.jcaho.org
- A survey reported in the New England Journal of Medicine found that 53% of physicians and 65% of the public cited the shortage of nurses as a leading cause of medical errors. Overall, 42% of the public and more than a third of U.S. doctors reported that they or their family members have experienced medical errors in the course of receiving medical care. (December 2002) www.kff.org/content/2002/20021211a
- Two recent studies funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality found that higher nurse workloads are associated with an increased likelihood of failure to rescue and death within 30 days of hospital admission." <http://www.ahrq.gov/research/nursestaffing/nursestaff.htm#Staffing>