Title: Expanding Ethical Work Environments: Impact on Nurse Satisfaction

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Description:

Historically, the nursing workforce has managed high turnover rates, increased acuity levels, and evolving staffing patterns reflective of managed care initiatives, however, the current global shortage of qualified nurses is a critical concern to health care administrators within and beyond the borders of the United States. The nurse population is expected to grow 6% between the years 2000-2020, while the demand for nurses in the US alone is expected to grow by 40% during the same time period (HRSA, 2006). Innovative strategies aimed at recruitment of highly qualified and motivated nurses plus retention efforts to keep nurses in their hired positions are goals in any health care organization. Empirical research on the relationship between ethical work environment and nurse satisfaction and moral distress has been consistently reported in the literature and is an important variable for nurse leaders at the macro and micro levels to consider in creating environments that increase nurse satisfaction, retention and which will ultimately promote improved patient outcomes.

This descriptive, correlational study adds to the growing body of literature supporting a significant correlation between practicing in an ethical environment and nurse stress and satisfaction levels. Nurses can create an ethical climate in which networks of knowledge intersect with patients, families, and inter-professionally with physicians and other healthcare team members. The study examined the relationship between moral distress intensity, moral distress frequency and the ethical climate in 2 large southern metropolitan acute care hospitals. In addition, the relationship of demographic characteristics to moral distress intensity and frequency was reviewed. Following university and hospital Review Board approval, 600 registered nurses employed full time were invited to voluntarily participate in the study. Response rates for the two hospitals were 72% & 49%. Two questionnaires, The Moral Distress Scale (MDS) and the Hospital Ethical Climate Survey were administered online through a secure site.