Patient Acuity Matrix for nursing job satisfaction and retention

Olufunmilayo Ogunlami, RN

Fort Hays State University, Department of Nursing

Introduction

Nurses are faced with increased workload and higher acuity patients (Tomic, 2017), hence the need for interventions to retain nurses and increase job satisfaction for nurses. In order to improve nursing job satisfaction, retention and improve the quality of care provided by nurses, there should be a fair and equitable patient assignment process known as patient acuity matrix.

Research Question

For acute care nursing staff, what is the effect of a patient acuity staff matrix on nurse job satisfaction and retention compared to no patient acuity consideration in staff assignments

Purpose

The purpose of the research is to determine if a patient acuity matrix will have a positive effect on job satisfaction and job retention for nurses.

Conceptual Framework

Using Virginia Henderson's nursing theory, an individual achieves wholeness and health by maintaining physiological and emotional balance (Gonzalo, 2019). One of the ways nurses meet those emotional needs is through job satisfaction. When nurses are satisfied with their jobs, it will reflect in the quality of care they provide to their patients.

Methods

Different research studies were reviewed for the patient acuity matrix but not all them were selected for the systematic review. The inclusion criteria for the selected research articles were research studies conducted between 2015 and 2020, conducted in an inpatient setting and relevant to the PICO question. In the research studies, the patient acuity matrix was implemented and the effectiveness of the tool on job satisfaction and retention was determined. The methods used in the selected research studies were data collection from the charge nurses and surveys of the nursing staff about the effectiveness of the acuity-driven nursing assignment

Results

Based on the research studies reviewed, the implementation of patient acuity matrix improved nursing job satisfaction and retention. According to a survey, there was 11% improvement in weighted average of nursing satisfaction (Ingram & Powell, 2018). In another research study, 94% of nurses surveyed found out the acuity tool has helped with nurse assignment (*Improved Safety Through an Acuity Driven Tool, n.d.)* while another study showed a favorable result of 97.7% after implementation of a patient acuity matrix compared to 63% pre-implementation (Dark & Ellis, 2020). A research survey also indicated 34% increase in job satisfaction for nurses after the implementation of a patient acuity matrix (O'Connell et al., 2020).

Evidence based research studies has shown that patient acuity matrix has improved nurse job satisfaction and retention compared to no patient acuity consideration in staff assignments.

Reference: O'Connell, A.L., Nettleton, R.M., Bunting, D.R., & Eichar, S. (2020, February 17). *What works: Equitable nurse-patient assignments using a workload tool.* Retrieved July 20, 2020, from https://www.myamericannurse.com/what-works-equitable-nurse-patient-assignments-using-a-workload-tool/

Implications for Nursing

The implementation of a patient acuity tool in making assignment will decrease the level of stress placed on nurses, improve nursing care and patient satisfaction. It will help to reduce medication errors, reduces nurse fatigue and burnout. It will also improve nurse retention and job satisfaction *(Improved Safety Through an Acuity Driven Tool, n.d.).* The responsibility of making assignment usually falls on the charge nurses. Having a patient acuity tool will help the charge nurses assign patients equally to nurses.

References: *A new patient-acuity tool promotes equitable nurse-patient assignment.* (n.d). Retrieved July 18, 2020, from https://www.pinterest.com/pin/493425702915896669/

Dark, T., & Ellis, W.M. (2020, January 4). *Level loading nurse assignments based on the work intensity.* Retrieved July 20, 2020, from https://www.myamericannurse.com/level-loading-nurse-assignments-based-on-the-work-intensity/

Doyle, J. (n.d.). *All Wales nurse staffing programme.* Retrieved July 18, 2020, from http://www.1000livesplus.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1011/Nurse%20Staffing%20brochure%20%28English%2C%20web%29.pdf

Gonzalo, A. (2019, August 24). *Virginia Henderson: Nursing Need Theory.* Retrieved July 19, 2020, from https://nurseslabs.com/virginia-hendersons-need-theory/#:~:text=The%20Nursing%20Need%20Theory%20was,their%20progress%20in%20the%20hospital.

Improved safety through an acuity driven tool. (n.d.). Retrieved July 18, 2020 from https://www.marylandpatientsafety.org/documents/minogue/Improved_Safety_Through_An_Acuity_Driven_Tool.pdf

Ingram, A., & Powell, J. (2018, April 11*). Patient acuity tool on a medical-surgical unit.* Retrieved July 18, 2020, from https://www.myamericannurse.com/patient-acuity-medical-surgical-unit/

Tomic, K. (2017, May 15). *Nursing assignment based on patient acuity: the road to nursing job satisfaction.* Retrieved July 18, 2020, from https://scholar.valpo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1107&context=ebpr