Ethical Dilemmas, Perceived Risk, and Motivation Among Nurses During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Daniel Sperling, S.J.D.
Department of Nursing, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel

Purpose: The research has three main purposes: to evaluate nurses' perceived risk and their motivation to work during the COVID-19 outbreak; to explore nurses' attitudes on various ethical dilemmas which are relevant to the pandemic; to examine motivational factors to working during the pandemic and their implications on the nursing career.

Methods: A questionnaire consisting of 53 items was designed for this research and completed by 231 nurses and nursing interns in Israel after it was posted in 18 Facebook groups of nurses, one WhatsApp group and through snowball sampling.

Results: 68.8% of respondents received some training on COVID-19. On a 1 (with no risk at all) to 10 (very high risk) scale, respondents position themselves in a relatively high risk for COVID-19 contamination (6.2) (SD=2.5). Significantly, 32.7% of them rank their risk in its highest levels (8-10). About a third fear coming to work because of potential contamination and do not feel protected. Nurses who work in units which have clear policy guidelines on COVID-19 fear less to come to work than nurses who work in units which do not have such guidelines (p=0.04). Nurses in private hospitals fear more to come to work than nurses in other work environments (p=0.04). In addition, the higher nurses' perceived risk of COVID-19, the more they fear coming to work (r=0.19; p=0.01). 40.9% fear caring for COVID-19 patients. 41.1% of respondent highly or very much agree that caring for sick or carrier COVID-19 patients involves significant emotional burden. Yet, 74.7% do not believe they have a right to refuse treat certain patients.

Maximum age for care provision in case of scarcity is 84 (SD=19). A large majority (81.4%) believe that every patient has a right to optimal treatment regardless of age and health background.

Nurses' most important motivational factors to work during in the health system COVID-19 are respondents' obligation to treat patients (38%), followed by the obligation to provide help to the Israeli society (22%) and the need to make a living (16%).

Conclusion: Correlating to their strong commitment to care, nurses show no intention to leave the profession despite their stress, high perceived risk and feeling of insufficient support and protection at work. Nurses do not hold a utilitarian approach of resource allocation, thereby acknowledging the worth of every human being and her entitlement to care, regardless of its best outcomes. While experiencing significant personal risk and emotional burden, nurses show strong dedication to provide care, do not regret working in the nursing profession while seeking supportive climate for their needs and ethical concerns.
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Keywords:
COVID-19, Duty of care and Ethical dilemmas

Abstract Summary:
The paper evaluates nurses' perceived risk and their motivation to work during the COVID-19 outbreak; explores nurses' attitudes on various ethical dilemmas which are relevant to the pandemic; and examines motivational factors to working during the pandemic and their implications on the nursing career.

References:

First Primary Presenting Author
Primary Presenting Author

Daniel Sperling, S.J.D.
University of Haifa
Department of Nursing
Associate Professor
Mount Carmel
Haifa
Israel

Author Summary: Daniel Sperling is an Associate Professor in bioethics in the Department of Nursing at the University of Haifa. Prof. Sperling holds an LL.B and B.A.(Philosophy) from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and LL.M (Collaborative program in bioethics) and S.J.D. from the University of Toronto. Prof. Sperling is the author of three books as well as other numerous articles and book chapters in the area of law and bioethics.