Title:
Mandatory Nurse Staffing Models for Patient Safety

Linda Silas
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Abstract Text:
Dynamic, shared decision making models of nurse staffing that incorporate both patient factors and nurse characteristics provide a process where frontline nurses have direct input into staffing decisions. Innovative methods of blending staffing solutions such as nurse patient ratios with more dynamic models (like Synergy Professional Practice Model) create systems that rely on direct and ongoing input from frontline nurses.

This presentation, based on recent research by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions on workload and patient care, will review the effects of excessive workload and how staffing models can help by taking the dynamic nature of nursing and patient care into consideration.

American and Australian research and policies have shown that nurse-patient ratios not only provide patients with better quality care, they also save lives. This presentation will identify valuable lessons learned from the implementation of unique staffing models in Canada, including the importance of engaging frontline staff in the day-to-day decision making with respect to patient assignments. Positive results observed from the research include improved engagement and empowerment of frontline staff, which are linked to lower nurse turnover and better patient care. The ability of nursing staff to maximize their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, professional competencies and judgement is enhanced by this intervention.

Excessive nurse workload is dangerous and an issue that health leaders can not afford to ignore. Cuts to nurse staffing are common, despite the fact that they are not supported by the evidence. Research suggests that nursing workload issues can be effectively addressed in a cost-effective manner by focusing on safe staffing mechanisms that are dynamic and collaborative.
Access to real-time, responsive mechanisms that give nurses the autonomy and authority to ensure the delivery of safe, quality patient care, while also contributing to the viability of health care systems, is critical to appropriate staffing.