FIT FOR THE FUTURE:
AUSTRALIAN NURSES' HEALTH STATUS AND HEALTH BEHAVIOURS

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WHO CARES FOR THE CARERS?
WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT NURSES’ HEALTH

• Lots about nurses as a female population group (Nurses Health Study)
• Studies of student nurses
• Quite a lot about nurses’ job stress, burn-out and coping
• A scatter of single-site topic studies e.g. smoking
• The Nurses and Midwives e-Cohort study
• As the single biggest healthcare workforce – pitifully little
NURSING & NURSES’ HEALTH:

Nursing advantage:
• Working age/ employed
• Predominantly female
• Largely graduate
• Socio-economic advantage
• High health literacy

Occupational risk factors:
• Ageing profiles
• Shift work
• ‘Stress’ → dysfunctional coping
• Manual / desk work
• Occupational exposures & physical injuries
OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Conduct the first representative survey to:
   a) Determine the health of the workforce and prevalence of modifiable risk factors
   b) Identify factors motivating and driving choices of health-related behaviours.

2. Consult to identify research, policy & practices to safeguard the future capability of the workforce and optimise their capacity to deliver care.
CONSTRUCT A SURVEY TO BE DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY

Used established questionnaires where we could:

• Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health
• Nurses and Midwives e-Cohort Study
• Australian Health Survey / Australian Census

UTS: CENTRE FOR HEALTH SERVICES MANAGEMENT
CONSTRUCT AND DELIVER AN ELECTRONIC SURVEY

Used established questionnaires where we could:
- Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health
- Nurses and Midwives e-Cohort Study
- Australian Health Survey / Australian Census
- Impact of Adding Nursing Support workers to Patient, Nurse and System outcomes Survey

Used established tools where available:
- SF 12
- Insomnia Severity Index … and others

Our pilot study in 2 Sydney hospitals
WE ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT -

- **Demographic characteristics**
  age, gender, highest educational qualification, ethnicity, carer commitments

- **Workforce characteristics**
  work role, work setting, workplace location, work contract, hours worked per week, shifts worked, workplace injuries and abuse

- **General health and well-being**
  perceived general health, presence of disease and symptoms: continence, pain and sleep, medications, hospital admissions and sick days etc.
WE ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT:

• Health behaviours
diet, exercise, weight/ BMI, smoking, alcohol
(routine health screening uptake)

• Intention to leave their job within 6 / 12 months

• (Job satisfaction
• Quality of life)
RESPONSES

- 5,446 surveys submitted
- 385 (7%) excluded due to missing data
  20 not practicing in NSW
- Final sample 5,041 respondents

- Approx 88,319 RNs and ENs & 9,524 midwives eligible
- NSWNMA ≈ 63,000
- Representative of NSW workforce?
**REPRESENTATIVE OF NSW N & M WORKFORCE?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents:</th>
<th>NSW registrants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age</td>
<td>48.0 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital-based</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
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</table>
Foundational (RN, RM, EN, CNS, CMS) 70.6%
Advance practice (NP, CNC, MP, CMC) 7.5%
Domain specific (Educator, manager, researcher, admin any type) 15.3%
Assistant in Nursing 5%
WORK PATTERNS

- **Current work contract:**
  - **Full time**
  - **Part time**
  - **Casual/pool/agency/other**
- **Av hours worked/week**
- **Work 40 hrs/wk or more**
- **Shift worker** (not days only)
- **Av years in RN/RM/EN role**
“Overall, I am satisfied with my current job”
‘In general, would you say your health is –’
• Av number of sick days 5.5 +/- 12.7
• Av number ‘mental health’ days 1.7 +/- 7.2
• Had hospital admission 16.8%

• Reports at least 1 chronic disease 64.9%
  mood disorders 26.1%
  bone & joint 19.4%
  cardiovascular 19.0%
  respiratory 18.8%
  diabetes 8.3%
SYMPTOMS ‘SOMETIMES OR MORE OFTEN’ IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

- Back pain 46.6%
- Stiff joints 39.8%
- Allergies 33.8%
- Anxiety 20.7%
- Mouth problems 13.1%
- Night sweats 16.5%
- Severe tiredness 43.9%
- Headaches 39.2%
- Indigestion 24.2%
- Depression 18.1%
- Constipation 12.2%
- Urine leakage 11.1%
- Breathing problems 8.3%

Av total symptom count 3.4 +/- 2.7 symptoms
How often experienced bodily pain in past 4 weeks?

How much bodily pain in past 4 weeks?
COMPARED TO THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION -

Broadly similar?

- Mental health diagnoses, eg diagnoses in previous 12 months: 23% anxiety/ depression compared to 20% any MH diagnosis in 2007 population

- Chronic diseases eg 17% hypertension compared to 22% age 18 yrs + with measured high BP in 2012

- Asthma rates higher - 15.0% versus 10.2%

Shouldn’t nurses look better than the general population?

- 50.6% excellent/ very good health 55.1% of Australian population
Do we eat our veggies? (5 portions pd)
YES 10.9%
Australians: 8.3%

Do we eat 2 portions of fruit pd?
YES 54.6%
Australians: 48.3%
Any smoking 13.1%
Daily smoking 7.9%
Australians 16.3%

Tobacco smoke exposure:
At work: 11.5%
Own home: 6.6%
Others’ homes: 5.5%
Public places: 0.2%
Outdoor areas: 25.4%

6% intend to quit within 6 mths……
Drinking 5+ days per week: 10.8%
‘Risky drinking’: 14.8%
Australians: 19.5%
Average BMI 27.8 (+/- 6.2) kg/m² (n=4503)

Under/normal weight 34.6%

Overweight 28.0%

Australians: 35% overweight 28.3% obese

Obese 27.0%
Waist circumference (n=3,508): 88.3%
Australian women: 66.6% at increased risk

medium risk 15.1%
‘at risk’ 44.1%
high risk 29.1%
Within 6 months: 6.0%
Within 12 months: 22.2%
NURSES WERE MORE LIKELY TO INTEND TO LEAVE IF THEY -

- Were younger
- In a foundational role
- Worked in residential aged care, rehabilitation or disability
- Reported less job satisfaction
- Experienced workplace injury or abuse

Nurses were less likely to intend to leave if they –

- Were family care providers
- Worked in inner regional areas
THOSE WHO INTENDED TO LEAVE -

- Poorer general health
- More sick days
- More hospitalisations
- More often diagnosed with anxiety
- Experienced:
  - more severe bodily pain,
  - more symptoms of back pain, severe
  - tiredness, indigestion, depression, breathing &
  - sleeping problems
TAKING EVERYTHING INTO ACCOUNT, NURSES LESS LIKELY TO INTEND TO LEAVE IF -

• **Older**: every 5 years of age reduced the odds of leaving by more than 7% (OR=0.924; 95% CI: 0.892, 0.957)

• **Worked in inner regional areas** (OR=0.760; 95% CI: 0.631, 0.915)

• **Worked shifts** (OR=0.76; 95% CI: 0.65, 0.90)

• Reported better **job satisfaction** (OR=2.64; 95% CI: 2.43, 2.86)

• and better **general health** (OR=0.92, 95% CI: 0.84, 0.99)

Those with breathing problems 34% more likely to intend to leave (OR=1.34; 95% CI: 1.03, 1.76)
NEXT: CONSULTATION STAGE:

• Identify research, policy & practices which policy-makers and managers can initiate to safeguard the future capability of the workforce and optimise their capacity to deliver care.
  
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and 5,446 Australian nurses & midwives