Sleep Deprivation and the Potential Impact on Nursing Students’ Practice and Health

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There are no financial conflicts of interest.

Today’s Nursing Students

• Full time classes
• Part to full-time employment
• 12 hour work shifts
• 12 hour clinical experiences
• Work + clinical experiences = 7 days/week
• Working and clinical experiences on all shifts
• Competing commitments (i.e. academic, employment, social) lead to sleep deprivation

Today’s Nursing School

• Increasing competition for clinical sites
• Decreasing clinical day availability
• Increasing use of 12 hour shifts for clinical: reduces number of clinical days but provides realistic experience and professional practice transition
• Demanding didactic and clinical requirements

Study Participants

• 328 pre-licensure nursing students* were invited to participate
• 182 agreed to participate
• 179 completed the study (54%) response rate
• 157 were 19-24 years old
• 169 females/10 males
• 163 were single

(*All students were enrolled in a baccalaureate nursing program)

Methods

Used a 21-item 4-point Likert type scale

Questions included:
• Personal sleep habits
• Number of hours at clinical experiences and work
• Motor vehicle use after work and clinical experiences
• Spare time activities
• Sleep aid use
• Stimulant use

Implications for Nursing Students

Sleep dysfunction and physical/mental fatigue increase risk for:
• Injury during and/or after clinical and work experiences
• Increased error rates
• Automobile accidents
• Stress
• Academic failure
• Early burnout
• Substance abuse
• Acute and chronic health issues

Implications

• Schools of nursing and healthcare leaders must collaborate to develop strategies that improve clinical hours and encourage improved student sleep habits
• Establish safety considerations for those engaged in consecutive 12 hour work shifts and clinical experiences
• Teach nursing students about the potential negative impact of 12 hour shifts and poor sleep habits on performance and personal health

Results

• 87% of participants needed 8 or more hours of sleep to feel rested
• 107 participants only received 5-6 hours of sleep
• 62% of participants reported 6 hours or less of sleep prior to attending class and 6 hours or less of sleep prior to a nursing clinical experience
• 98% of participants believed they would perform better academically if they had more sleep
• 85% of participants admitted to using some form of caffeine to combat sleepiness
• 31% of participants took sleeping pills to induce sleep
• 20% of participants took other forms of stimulants to stay awake
• 95% of participants believed they provided quality care with less than 8 hours of sleep

References


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