Promoting Healthy Work Environments by Evaluating and Addressing Sleep Habits of Nursing Students

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Disclosure

Dr. Thomas, Dr. McIntosh and Dr. Lamar have no conflict of interest to report.

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Objectives

- Explain current situational context that promotes nursing student sleep deprivation.
- Discuss consequences of sleep deprivation for nursing students and healthcare environments.
- Describe participants, methods, and results of a study of nursing students’ sleep habits.
- Analyze nursing student sleep study implications.
- Develop strategies that address nursing student sleep deprivation and promote healthy work environments.
A Snapshot of a Current Nursing Student

- Full time classes
- Part- to full-time employment
- 8-12 hour work shifts
- 8-12 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
Daily Challenges for Schools of Nursing

- Increasing competition for clinical sites
- 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
- Decreasing clinical day availability
Consequences for Nursing Students

Sleep dysfunction and physical/mental fatigue creates increase risk for:

- Injury during and/or after clinical and work experiences
- Increased error rates
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Increased stress
- Academic failure
- Early burnout
- Substance abuse
- Acute and chronic health issues
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

- A 21-item 4-point Likert scale
- Questionnaire included:
  - Personal sleep habits
  - Number of hours at clinical and work
  - Motor vehicle use after clinical and work
  - Spare time activities
  - Sleep aid use
  - Stimulant use
Results

- 87% of participants needed 8 or more hours of sleep to feel rested
- 60% of 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
99% of participants believed they provided quality care with less than 8 hours of sleep.

Participants believed they were safe to work in clinical 97% and work settings 96%.

85% of student participants believed 12 hour school and work experiences did not negatively impact safety.
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.
What Clinical Sites Can Do

- Limit students’ outside employment hours while in clinical courses
- Nurse (who made an error) talk to students about importance of sleep
- Quiet room on their break
- Encourage use of buddy system with students
What Schools of Nursing Can Do

- Admit the Issue
- Discuss at student events
- Discuss at faculty meetings
- Develop & implement a simulation related to sleep
- Talk honestly to students about effects of sleep deprivation
- Educate on tips for healthy sleep
What the Student Can Do

- Create a schedule that includes sufficient time for hours of sleep needed
- Take action to improve sleep
- Avoid stimulants and sleep aids
- Exercise regularly
- Seek help
References


