“Do I stay or do I go now?” Exploring the concept of moral distress in operating room nurses

Background

Operating room nursing is a highly charged profession and like most specialties is faced with life and death decisions to ethical dilemmas. Moral distress is a concept that has been explored in various different nursing specialties. The research shows that moral distress can impact practice negatively such as contributing to burnout, mental and physical illness, as well as premature abandoning of the profession. The concept of moral distress has never been studied in operating room nurses and since this specialty practices in an ever changing challenging environment it is worthy of exploration.

Methods

A quantitative, voluntary electronic survey design study utilizing the Moral Distress Score Revised (MDS-R) (Hamric) and the COPE inventory (Carver) was conducted at a multi-campus hospital system in the northeast. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Results

Three hundred operating nurses were invited to participate in the study, which yielded a 20% response rate (N=61). Overall the total MDS-R was low, but when separated for those nurses who have either left a position due to moral distress or were considering leaving now was almost triple. The amount of moral distress was also found to be lower when the nurses reported using positive coping mechanisms and had a practice environment that was considered positive.

Implications

Moral distress is present in operating room nurses and positive coping mechanisms and a healthy work environment may be able to help mitigate the negative impact. The amount of overall moral distress can influence retention and overall health and well-being in operating room nurses. With the looming shortage of specialty nurses especially operating room nurses in acute care, this study can assist leaders in creating a positive work environment. Ultimately retaining experienced operating room nurses has both a financial implication along with positive patient outcomes.
Title:
Do I Stay or Do I Go Now?” Exploring Moral Distress in Operating Room Nurses

Keywords:
Coping, Moral Distress and Operating Room RNs

References:


Abstract Summary:
Moral distress was explored in Operating Room RNs. A quantitative, voluntary survey design study utilizing the Moral Distress Score Revised (MDS-R) (Hamric) and the COPE inventory (Carver) was conducted. We examined that while moral distress is low in frequency when situations arise it can cause statistically significant job dissatisfaction.

Content Outline:
Intro: Explore the relationship between moral distress and coping among OR RNs in multicampus acute care hospital environments

1. Purpose of study- Descriptive correlational study to explore the relationship between coping and moral distress among OR RNs

2. Why study in the OR population- during literature review of this topic, no studies were found focusing solely on the operating room RNs related to coping and moral distress. Challenges as a practicing RN in the OR

Body

1. Concept of Moral Distress- definition, statistics and previous research

2. Hypothesis- there is no relationship between coping and moral distress in OR RNs, the more positive the coping skills the lower the amount of moral distress experienced by OR RNs, the more negative the coping skills the greater the amount of moral distress experienced by the OR RN.

3. Review of the literature- definition of moral distress and moral distress in nursing practice;

4. Theoretical Framework

5. Research Design and Methods

6. Results
7. Implications

Conclusions of the study

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