2022

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The Impact of Stress Reduction Techniques on Nurse Burnout:
A Literature Synthesis

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Introduction

Does the use of stress reduction techniques decrease the rate of nurse burnout in the workplace?

According to the University of St. Augustine School of Health Sciences, nurse burnout is the state of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion caused by work-related stressors such as long hours, the pressure of quick decision-making, and the strain of caring for patients who may have poor outcomes. The higher rates of burnout can lead to nursing staff turnover, lower quality care, higher patient mortality, and increased emotional exhaustion among staff.
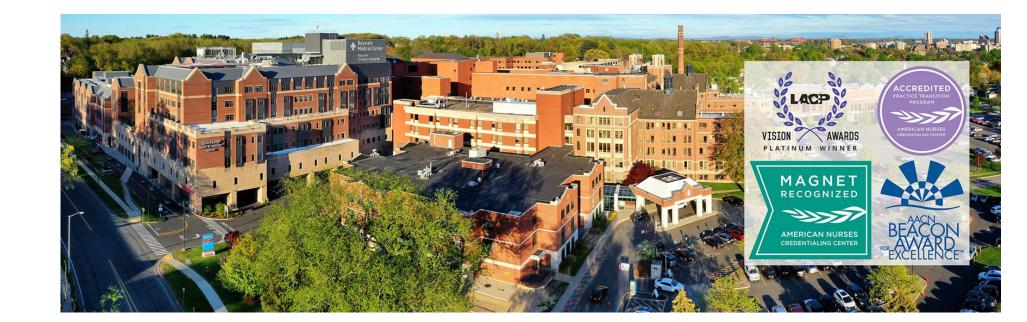
Methodology

The databases used to find journals, articles, and data included Academic OneFile, Gale OneFile, and Medline.

Key search terms included: Burnout, Healthcare Stress, Mental Health, Nursing Research, Workplace Stress, Stress Management, Stress Reduction, Wellness

A literature review revealed five articles that were selected to be used to compare the effectiveness of the stress reduction techniques used to combat stress and decrease burnout among nurses. These articles support the statement that the use of stress reduction techniques in the workplace decrease the rate of nurse burnout.

Findings

According to the American Nurses Foundation, a 2021 survey reveals 34% of nurses are either not or not at all emotionally healthy. By nursing position, 52% of nurses work in intensive or critical care areas, 46% emergency department, and 44% medical surgical.

Solutions to help reduce nurse burn out include spending time with family, friends, or animals, leisure or entertainment, or spending time in nature. Ammerman (2021) states, when nurses undergo stressors, they often turn to maladaptive behaviors (overeating, skipping meals, poor sleep habits, and failure to exercise) to cope. By taking a self-inventory, applying known stress-reduction techniques (such as exercise, enjoying fresh air, catching up on sleep, meditating, or praying), and seeking   professional treatment provide evidence-based strategies to prevent depression, burnout, and compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue, burnout, low resiliency, and depersonalization are intensified effects of prolonged stress. Higher levels of resiliency are found in nurses with better coping strategies and better utilization of stress reduction techniques. These stress reduction techniques examined by Brown (2018) include written exercises, relaxation, exercise programs, identification of triggers, and mindfulness. Those with positive coping techniques showed personality traits of optimism, self-efficacy, hope, and flexibility, all leading to a higher job satisfaction level, lowered stress level, and lower rate of burnout.

Conclusion

Findings of the literature synthesis included that stress reduction techniques are the most effective in combatting stress and reducing burnout among nurses. Future research must implement and evaluate multiple sites and varying nursing specialties. Several of the long term effects of the bundle strategy are important to incorporate with the growing number of burnout rates among nurses in the United States. Stress reduction techniques are unique to the person using them and can only be used effectively with repeated use over time.

Next steps for evidence based practice include the implementation of stress prevention techniques primary to the use of stress reduction techniques, in order to effectively prevent burnout in nurses, before the burnout has already occurred.

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