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Travel Nurses: A Review of the Literature

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Travel Nurses: A Review of the Literature

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Background

- In 2021 the nursing turnover rate hit an all-time high of 27% (NSI, 2023) and it is predicted that by 2030 the nursing shortage in the U.S. will reach half a million jobs (Zhang et al., 2018).
- Pre-pandemic, travel nurses accounted for 6% of all hospital nurses (Aiken et al., 2007), which grew by 35% in 2020 (Zhang et al., 2018).
- The typical travel nurse contract is 13 weeks long.
- Demographics pre-pandemic: highly experienced and more educated than the general nursing population (Aiken et al., 2007) and more likely to remain at the bedside throughout their career (Faller et al., 2011).
- Costs associated with travel are often included in reimbursement items, such as housing, travel, meals, and incidentals. Hourly rate of pay, overtime and bonus rates, are subject to dramatic fluctuations which correspond to staffing needs and shortages.
- Travel nurse assignments are typically in areas of high-turnover and low patient-to-staff ratios, factors that contribute to ethical challenges in the work environment. Despite this, travel nurses exhibit high levels of job satisfaction and remain in direct inpatient care (Faller et al., 2011).
- It is unknown how travel nurses experience challenges in their workplace environment and what contributes to high job satisfaction rates.

Purpose

The purpose of this review is to determine what is known about travel nurses, inclusive of their impact on healthcare, demographics and characteristics.

Goals/Objectives

- Goal 1: Describe the literature to date surrounding travel nurses
 - Objective 1: Describe the major themes surrounding travel nursing impact on healthcare organizations
 - Objective 2: Describe the major themes regarding travel nurses’ perceptions of their work

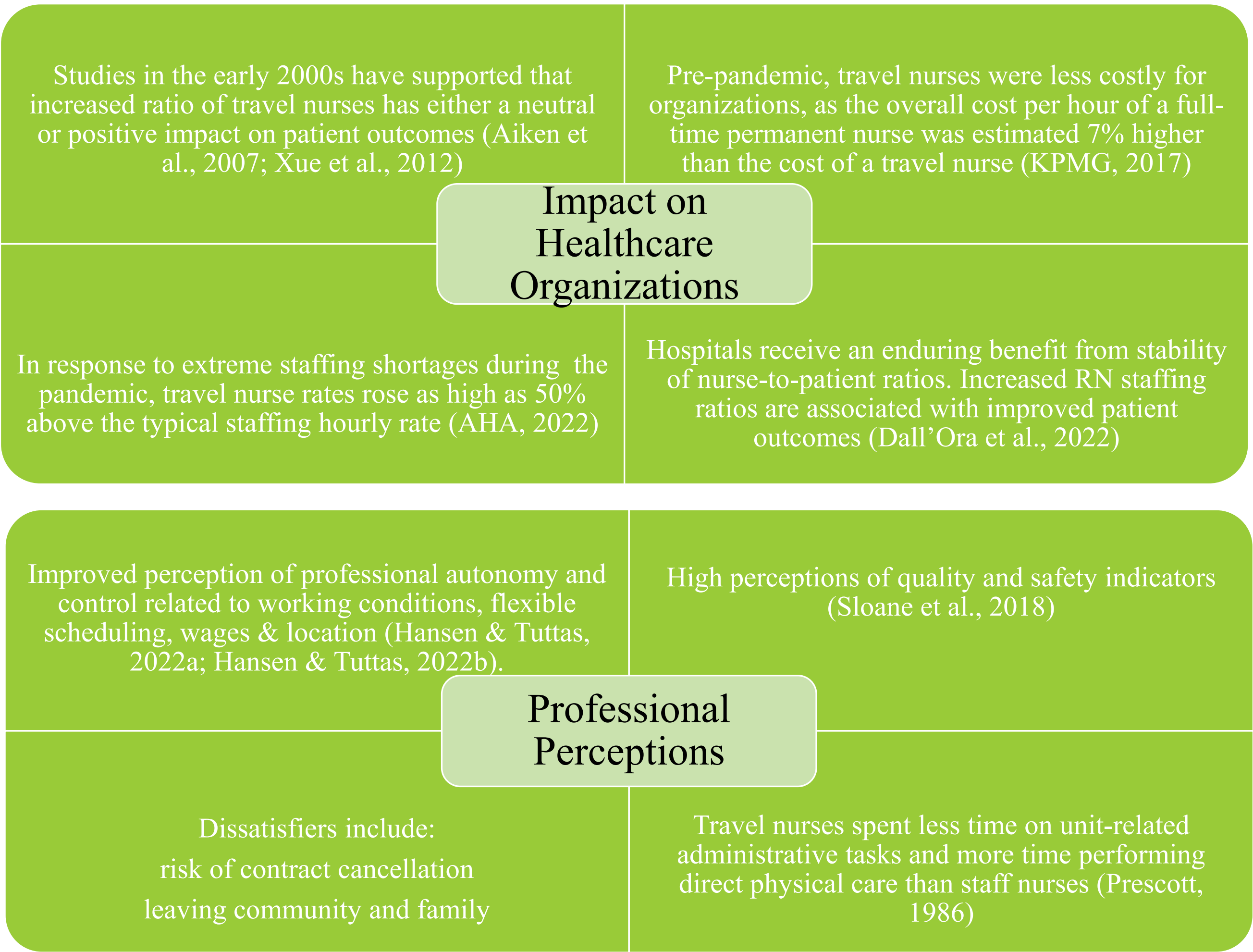
Methodology

A review of the literature was conducted in March of 2023. PubMed, CINAHL and PsycInfo were searched with the following search terms:

- “Travel Nursing”[Mesh]
- Employment Status AND ((temporary or contract or visiting or travel).mp.) AND (healthcare.mp.)

23 articles were reviewed spanning publication from 1986 to 2023. Additional employment data was derived from nursing organization reports and government databases.

Outcomes



Conclusions

- Travel nurses are underexplored in research.
- Travel nurses have a unique perspective regarding hospital environments and professional autonomy.
- Further exploration of travel nurse experiences will provide a novel perspective regarding the factors that influence the nursing workforce.
- Novel perspectives are needed to identify strategies that mitigate nurse turnover, support high quality care & optimal outcomes.

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