
Study: Death Rates Rise Under Lower Skilled Staff



A large [European study published online in BMJ Quality and Safety](#) shows that the chances of a patient dying in hospital under the watch of lower-skilled nursing assistants rather than professionally-qualified nurses rises dramatically.

With the average mix of nurse professional levels and mix of skills, for every 25 patients, if just one professional nurse is substituted with a lower skilled nursing assistant, the odds of a patient dying rises by 21 percent.

The study findings highlight concerns over budgeting that has led healthcare leaders to reconsider their nursing staff skills to the detriment of care mix owing to financial pressures, reforms in healthcare and shortages in nursing staff.

The research team analysed the connection between the nursing skill mix and the chance of patient death, how patients viewed their care along with other care quality indicators such as bedsores and prevalence of sores in acute care hospitals in Belgium, England, Finland, Ireland, Spain and Switzerland.

See Also: [4 Reasons for Nurses to Join Hospital Boards](#)

The findings were based on survey responses from over 13, 000 nurses, 243 hospitals and close to 19, 000 patients.

Where there was a higher proportion of professionally-qualified nursing staff, the survey found that the risk of death decreased significantly and reported higher patient satisfaction levels. They also reported fewer incidents of poor quality care like falls, bedsores and urinary infections. Staff were happier to work with nurses expressing more job satisfaction and fewer cases of burnout.

The [study clearly pointed to the risks](#) that come with cutting corners on staff budgeting. Researches suggested that hospital executives exercise caution when putting policies into place that lead to a reduction in the nursing skill mix as the consequences could be fatal for patients.

The findings, researchers say, suggest that hospital leaders should be cautious when implementing policies to reduce hospital nursing skill mix. The consequences, they said, can be life-threatening for patients.

Source: [BMJ, Fierce Healthcare](#)

Image Credit: Nursing Schools

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