

Policy analysis

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Policy Analysis It is believed by many of the registered nurses that the staffing in the most of the acute care hospitals is considered to be inadequate. It was in the year 1999 that California turned out to be the first state to come up with minimum nurse to patient ratio. The draft ratios were announced by the state officials in 2002 and this legislation was expected to get implemented by July 2003. It was estimated that the compliance cost will not be much. However the opportunity cost that can be generated by these mandatory ratios cannot be easily measured and therefore it may overshadow its advantages. The policy makers therefore adopt different strategies for addressing the concerns of nurses as these approaches can be more beneficial and less costly for the nurses as well as the patients.

The nurse workforce in a particular hospital is based on licensed practical nurses, registered nurses and licensed nurses and then there are nurses' aides. Both the LPNs and RNs are licensed by the same State in which they reside and practice. It is the responsibility of the RNs to assess the needs of the patients, administration treatments and medications and develop patient plans. The maintenance of the minimum nurse to patient ratio will be beneficial for the patients as well as the nurses. There is a need for the policymakers to realize not only the potential benefits associated with the ratio but also potential expenses associated with these benefits.

Minimum nurse staffing ratio helps the hospital to improve as well as increase the quality of its operations. The patients are more satisfied by the working of the staff and there are enough nurses present in the hospital to deal with emergency cases which results in low mortality rates. Acquiring minimum nurse staffing ratio also allows the hospital to give their full attention to each and every patient and not neglect the needs of any of

them. On the other hand not having adequate number of nurses will misbalance the effective working of the hospital and the lives of many patients will be at stake.

Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber in their article emphasize upon the importance of staffing ratio on the health of patients. There is no doubt about the fact that the staffing ratios help to alleviate the shortage of nurses. It discusses the fact that the working conditions of the hospitals may affect the number nurses willing to work within an hospital. Therefore staffing ratios help in improving the quality of hospitals which affect the patients' mortality rate and decreases the level of nurses job dissatisfaction. If there will not be enough staff of taking care of the patients admitted at the hospital then their life would be at stake. The drawback of this article is that the authors fail to calculate the direct and the opportunity cost associated with achieving the minimum nurse to patient ratio as it can be quite challenging for the hospital (Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber, 2002).

References

Aiken, L., Clarke, Sloane, J., Sochalski, J., & Silber, J. (2002). Hospital nurse staffing and patient mortality, nurse burnout, and job dissatisfaction. 1987-93.