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What factors influence home care nurses to stay at their jobs?

What is this research about?

In the Western world, health care services are increasingly being offered outside of hospitals. This means there is a growing need for home healthcare and community nursing. Currently, home care nurse employers in Ontario face difficulty recruiting and retaining enough nurses. Some strategies to recruit new nurses and retain others have been implemented, however, little is known about the effectiveness of these initiatives. There is a lack of research on the reasons why home care nurses stay in their current positions or decide to leave.

The purpose of this study was to determine the reasons why home care nurses wanted to stay employed in their current positions. This study is the first phase of a larger study aimed at developing, testing and refining a model of factors that affect home care nurses decisions to stay employed.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers held focus groups to explore reasons for why home care nurses intended to stay in or leave their current jobs. Registered

What you need to know:

This study explored the reasons why home care nurses decide to stay employed in their current job. Unlike previous research, job satisfaction was not identified as a single reason for deciding to stay employed. Rather, several categories, such as work environment, relationships, and job characteristics act together influence home care nurses' intention to remain employed. Understanding these factors is necessary to develop home care nurse retention strategies.

Nurses (RNs) and Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) in Ontario home care organizations were invited to participate. A total of fifty RNs and RPNs took part in six focus group sessions. Each session opened with the lead question: 'What factors in your work or life influence your decision to stay in or leave your position as a home care nurse?' Further questions were asked to clarify points and help researchers gain a better understanding of focus group content. These sessions were conducted until enough data was collected for analysis.



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What did the researchers find?

Researchers identified six categories of factors that influence home care nurses decisions to stay employed in their current positions. Findings from each of these categories include:

Job characteristics:

- Working with a variety of clients and using a range of skills in practice were important factors for nurses to stay employed.
- The self-directed nature of home care work was identified as both a benefit and a drawback of home care work.

Work structures:

- Home care nurses valued the opportunity to provide care to the same clients over time to develop trusting relationships.
- Home care nurses valued flexibility in scheduling and reported this as a reason for staying employed.
- Unmanageable, uneven and changing workloads were frustrating to home care nurses and negatively impacted their intention to stay employed.

Relationships and communication:

- Home care nurses reported positive relationships with clients and families as reasons for staying employed.
- Maintaining good relationships with co-workers was identified as an important reason to remain working in home care.

Work environment:

- Adequate job orientation was identified as important for nurses to transition into the home care setting. A rushed orientation

may mean nurses do not feel prepared and may be less likely to remain employed.

- Opportunities for additional education and training were frequently identified as important reasons to stay employed in home care.
- Aspects of the physical work environment including safety and access to supplies also influenced nurses' intention to stay employed.

Nurse responses to work:

- Being able to balance work and life was important for nurse intention to stay employed.
- The meaningfulness of home care work was a reason that nurses would stay employed.

Conditions of employment:

- Having a desirable employment status (e.g. part or full-time), being unionized and adequate pay and benefits were reasons that nurses would remain employed.
- Having to pay for work supplies out of pocket and working unpaid hours were reasons that nurses did not intend to stay employed in home care.

How can you use this research?

This research may help policymakers, employers and other stakeholders to better understand the complexity of factors involved in home care nurses' decisions to stay employed. Findings highlight the areas in which management of home care agencies should support its nursing staff. This research may help home care manage take action to:

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- Support home care nurses autonomy and decision making;
- Create nursing schedules and care plans that facilitate flexibility and continuity of care for patients;
- Promote reasonable workloads;
- Create opportunities for team building;
- Address issues of adequate pay and benefits.

Original Article:

To learn more about this study, we invite you to read the original research article:

Tourangeau, A., Patterson, E., Rowe, A., Saari, M., Thomson, H., Macdonald, G., Cranley, L. & Squires, M. (2013). Factors influencing home care nurse intention to remain employed. *Journal of Nursing Management*

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