

## **Patient Acuity, Nursing Workload, and Missed Care in the Intermediate Care Unit**

### **Abstract**

#### **Background and purpose**

The absence of a standard intermediate care unit (IMCU) care model results in poor perception of patient acuity, increased nursing workload and higher incidence of missed care events. This compromises nursing care and leads to suboptimal patient outcomes. A needs-based assessment was performed to explore the relationship between patient acuity, nursing workload, and missed care events on the target unit.

#### **Methods**

The project collected retrospective data on patient APACHE II scores to evaluate acuity. Nursing participants were invited to anonymously complete adapted tools via Qualtrics surveys that measured nursing workload (NASA TLX) and missed care events (MISSCARE). A focus group was conducted to further explore thoughts on missed care. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze results.

#### **Results**

Findings show that new graduate nurses reported highest means for mental demand, feeling hurried or rushed, effort to accomplish performance, and negative feelings, with lowest feelings of success in accomplishing nursing tasks than any other experience level. New graduates cited twice as many communication issues as the reason for missed care than nurses with 3-7 years experience. Lack of labor resources were the most common reason for missed care regardless of nursing experience. Focus group themes advocated to improve communication, teamwork, and availability of resources to address missed care.

#### **Conclusion and implications**

New graduates experienced the highest workload burden and most likely to miss care related to communication issues. This project identified supporting new graduate nurses as an influential stakeholder of addressing nursing workload and missed care events at this IMCU. Potential interventions include buddy systems, preceptorships, orientation programs, promoting positive work culture, and adequate staffing. Further explorative studies are required to elucidate strategies for standardizing IMCU design.

Key words: patient acuity, nursing workload, missed care, new graduate nurses, intermediate care unit