

Empowering Nurses: The Impact of a Mental Health Resource Nurse on Reducing Burnout and Enhancing Job Satisfaction in Medical-Surgical Units

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Introduction

Work-related stress among healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, is an increasing concern. In fast-paced environments like medical-surgical units, the pressure can lead to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and high turnover rates. Research by Søvdal et al. (2021) highlights the global need to prioritize healthcare workers' mental health, but there is still a gap in support tailored specifically for nursing staff. Foster et al. (2019) found that work-related stress significantly affects nurses' mental health, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

To address this, we introduced the Mental Health Resource Nurse (MHRN) role within a medical-surgical unit. The goal was to improve staff satisfaction with mental health resources and reduce burnout by providing dedicated support.

Background

Nurses face unique stressors due to the physical and emotional demands of their work. Long hours, emotionally intense patient care, and the added strain from the COVID-19 pandemic have only increased the need for mental health support. In medical-surgical units, where nurses provide direct care to patients with complex needs, stress and burnout can escalate, leading to turnover and increased workloads for the remaining staff. The introduction of dedicated mental health resources, such as the MHRN role, presents an opportunity to bridge the gap between mental health support and daily nursing practice.

Method

We surveyed 45 staff members before and after the intervention. Using the data collected from these surveys, we tailored the

implementation of the MHRN initiative. The project followed a multi-phase approach guided by the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, allowing for careful tracking of trends and utilization patterns through monthly interactions between staff and the MHRN. Volunteer nurses underwent mental health training to recognize stressors, signs of anxiety, and burnout. MHRNs informed staff about the resources available to them for mental wellbeing, performed monthly check-ins and educational sessions, and established newsletters to provide continuous mental health support. Additionally, a staff recognition program was created to boost morale and peer recognition.

Results

The project aimed to improve staff satisfaction with mental health resources by 15% and reduce self-reported stress and anxiety levels by 10%. The results exceeded expectations, with a 35% reduction in stress and anxiety levels and a 25% increase in satisfaction with mental health resources. Of the surveyed participants, 84% reported using MHRN resources, and 65% noted that the role positively impacted workplace morale. Additionally, 75% expressed a desire to see the MHRN role expanded and formalized across the institution. These findings demonstrate the significant positive impact of the MHRN role on mental well-being, indicating that such support can be beneficial across other healthcare settings.

Discussion

Implementing the MHRN role within the medical-surgical unit addressed work-re-

lated stress and burnout, reducing staff stress and improving satisfaction. The training provided to the MHRNs equipped them to identify mental health issues among their peers and offer timely support. By integrating mental health resources into daily operations, staff had consistent access to help when needed. Communication and engagement were critical to the initiative's success. Encouraging staff to seek support from the MHRNs fostered a more open, supportive work environment. While some challenges, such as balancing MHRN duties with regular nursing tasks, were encountered, careful planning and ongoing communication helped address these barriers.

Conclusion

The MHRN role proved to be a transformative strategy in addressing nurses' mental health needs. By providing dedicated mental health support, the initiative reduced stress and burnout, improved job satisfaction, and fostered a healthier work environment. This model is scalable and can be adapted across various healthcare settings, offering a practical solution for supporting healthcare workers' mental health and well-being. ■

References

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- Network with nursing leaders across Florida
- Gain valuable leadership experience
- Make a lasting impact on policies affecting nurses

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