

BACKGROUND

Nursing assignments play a critical role in patient safety and nurse well being. The balance of patient acuity and nurse workload is essential in determining the quality of care and preventing burnout. While many charge nurses use their experience and intuition to guide patient distribution, structured approaches to assignment making may provide more consistent and effective outcomes.

PURPOSE

This project examines current practices in nursing assignments, assesses how various assignment strategies affect patient care and staff workload, and emphasizes the role of perceived workload in influencing nurse satisfaction and performance.

METHODS

Many studies highlight the value of acuity tools in improving nurse satisfaction, though one study stood out by showing that nurses' perception of workload is also an important variable. At UMC, assignments are often based on broad assessments of patient acuity. This was compared to external models used in the study such as *Acuity Plus* which uses objective scoring systems paired with subjective workload data. Local use of manual acuity tools and their limitations were also reviewed, and a potential improvement involved integrating nurse preferences through collaboration within unit-based councils.



RESULTS

The study demonstrated that even with identical total acuity scores, assignments tailored to nurses' individual preferences led to lower perceived workloads. Manual acuity tools proved difficult to use in fast paced environments because of time demands and user fatigue, while software acuity tools allowed for dynamic updates but were limited by cost and implementation challenges. Incorporating staff preferences showed potential for enhancing both satisfaction and the sense of fairness in assignments.

CONCLUSIONS

Perceived workload is an overlooked factor in nursing assignments. Combining objective acuity with subjective preferences to tailor nursing assignments can enhance patient safety, improve job satisfaction, and decrease burnout. Moving forward, collaboration within unit-based councils to identify workload preferences may be an effective way to decrease stress for nursing staff.

REFERENCES

