

Issue Statement:

Staff Mix Decision-Making and Nursing Practice

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Position

ARNBC supports the need for decision-makers to include nurses in staff-mix decision making and to follow the five principles for staff mix decision-making found in *Staff Mix: Decision-Making Framework for Quality Nursing Care* (CNA, 2012)¹:

1. Decisions concerning staff mix respond to clients' health-care needs and enable the delivery of safe, competent, ethical, quality, evidence-informed care in the context of professional standards and staff competencies.
2. Decision-making regarding staff mix is guided by nursing care delivery models based on the best evidence related to (a) client, staff and organizational factors influencing quality care and work environments, and (b) client, staff and organizational outcomes.
3. Staff mix decision-making is supported by the organizational structure, mission and vision and by all levels of leadership in the organization.
4. Direct care nursing staff and nursing management are engaged in decision-making about the staff mix.
5. Information and knowledge management systems support effective staff mix decision-making.

Background

Patients achieve positive health outcomes when a wide variety of regulated and unregulated care providers work in close collaboration to meet their healthcare needs. When an individual is admitted to hospital, the mix of staff that is most appropriate to manage their health condition should be determined by professional, regulated health care providers who have the expertise to make the best decisions based on the needs of the patient. Registered nurses, at all levels, should be key participants in identifying the health care needs of the patient population.

Care needs of patients in all health care settings are more complex and their conditions more acute than 20 years ago². A key role registered nurses play in the delivery of care to inpatients is to evaluate client conditions on an ongoing basis, even while performing outwardly simple tasks such as assisting a patient to the toilet. Individualized care planning extends beyond listing tasks to be done for a patient. It requires professional nurses to be with patients regularly throughout their time in hospital. Nurses need to be in contact with patients to ensure safe care. It is through skilled assessment by a professional nurse that changes in patient health conditions are detected and can be managed in a timely manner. Continuity of care provided by a consistent professional nurse working in concert with a care team that may include unregulated health care providers ensures quality care. Other important dimensions of continuity include continuity of patient assignment and continuity of care provided over time.

¹Staff mix decision-making: The act of determining the mix of the different categories of health-care personnel employed for the provision of direct client care (CNA et al., 2012, p. 4).

²VIHA (2013) The New Right Way: Introducing New Staffing Models on Vancouver Island

Conclusion

British Columbia's 36,000 registered nurses are committed to ensuring quality care is available to all British Columbians. The Association of Registered Nurses of British Columbia recognizes the economics of health care delivery must entail staff mix decisions that contribute to positive health outcomes and the cost-effective allocation of health human resources. Changes to care delivery models are having a profound influence on nursing practice and patient care. As B.C.'s professional association, ARNBC recognizes the considerable evidence and best practice guidelines available to guide staff mix decisions toward the most cost effective care delivery models and expects decision-makers to engage nurses at all levels of organizations in their application. We strongly encourage all registered nurses and decision makers to take direction from the five principles for staff mix decision-making found in *Staff Mix: Decision-Making Framework for Quality Nursing Care* (CNA, 2012.)

References

Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Practical Nurses Association, Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators & Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Canada, (2012). *Staff Mix: Decision-Making Framework for Quality Nursing Care*.