

# Twelve-Hour Nursing Shifts and the Impact on Patient Safety

## Background

- 12 hour shifts originated as a way to overcome nursing shortages decades ago.
- Nursing in the inpatient setting is a 24 hour per day job – working 12 hour shifts vs. 8 hour shifts has a negative impact on patient safety, patient satisfaction, and cognitive decline, resulting in avoidable errors.
- 65–80% of RNs work 12 hour shifts, only 14–30% of RNs work 8 hour shifts.

## Importance of Issue

- Nurses who worked 8 hour shifts reported a higher quality of care delivered to their patients than those who worked 12 hour shifts.
- Risk of error almost doubled when nurses worked > 12.5 consecutive hours.
- Nurses are statistically less likely to have the time and opportunity to complete activities that support good nursing practice when working long shifts.
- Hospital nurse shifts of 12 hours and more are associated with burnout, job dissatisfaction, and intention to leave.

## Framework

- The Johns Hopkins Nursing Evidence-Based Practice Model is a problem solving approach to clinical decision making.
- Integrates evidenced based practice, considers internal and external influences, and encourages critical thinking to care for the individual patient, patient population, or system.

## Key Concepts & Outcomes

Increase patient safety by educating nurses about cognitive decline with extended shift work.

Increase patient satisfaction.

Within 12 months, the unit/hospital will achieve a 25% reduction in medication errors after nurses transition from a 12-hour work day to 8 hours.

## Interventions & Solutions

### Individual Interventions:

- Educate RNs about the increased risks and errors of working extended shifts.
- Transition to an 8 hour work shift.

### Unit Level – Nurse Managers:

- Increase ancillary staff – increasing from two handoffs per day to three handoffs requires more staff scheduled to ensure patients stay safe.

### Policy – Hospital:

- Increase funding for nursing, which will result in higher payments via the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) tool that is used to score patient care – higher reimbursement from insurance companies with higher perceived inpatient care from patients.

## Key Players

- Patients
- Nurses
- Break/Resource Nurses
- Ancillary Staff
- Nurse Leaders
- Nurse Unions
- Administrators

## Evaluation

### Process Evaluations:

- Audit of reported medication errors over 12 month span.
- Audit HCAHPS scores – pre and post 8 hour shift transition.

### Impact Evaluations:

- Staff surveys using a 1–5 numerical scale.
- Patient satisfaction surveys – pre and post 8 hour shift transition.

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Jaimi Wisner, RN  
RN – BSN Student

Cal Poly  
Humboldt.