Nurse-to-nurse shift handover is defined as bidirectional communication that results in the transfer of information and responsibility for a patient during shift change (Frowen et al., 2006; McFetridge et al., 2007). Tregear et al. (2009) and Davidson et al. (2009) note that nurse-to-nurse shift handover is an integral part of safe nursing care. In order for nurses to have an effective handover, information exchange must be efficient, decision making must be clear, and outcomes must be prioritized. Most importantly, nurses working in the Emergency Department (ED) are at risk for receiving and giving inadequate handover communication as the majority of existing handover literature is focused on identifying handover interventions rather than identifying the factors that influence handover. It is only through understanding the factors that influence handover quality that effective interventions can be developed.

**STUDY OBJECTIVES**

1) To develop a theoretical model of factors that influence quality of nurse-to-nurse handover communication in the ED.

2) To test the hypothesized theoretical model of factors that influence quality of nurse-to-nurse handover communication in the ED.

**METHODS**

The first phase of this research included an electronic search of Medline and Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature databases using keywords handover, handoff, handover, transfer of accountability, shift report, sign out, sign off, change of shift, shift change, and change over. This yielded 468 published manuscripts which were included if they presented empirical data or if they included a theoretical perspective of factors that influence handover communication. Exclusion criteria included those papers that were opinion based such as editorials. Reference lists of papers were further assessed for publications and other resources that were not identified in online databases. A total of 83 published papers were included in this literature review in addition to six handover related systematic literature reviews. Based on literature findings, a theoretical model including 18 factors hypothesized to influence ED nurse-to-nurse shift handover quality was developed. Factors include individual factors such as fatigue and anxiety, environmental factors such as distractions and interruptions, and organizational factors such as safety climate. The theoretical model includes 18 direct relationships as well as four moderating relationships.

In the next phase of this study, the theoretical model will be tested empirically using primary survey data collected from a random sample of 450 ED nurses across the province of Ontario. Data will be analyzed using multiple linear regression to determine the factors that influence the quality of nurse-to-nurse shift handover in the ED.

**RESULTS**

A total of 316 surveys were returned, 74 of which did not meet inclusion criteria. The final eligible sample was 231 out of 376 surveys, resulting in a total response rate of 40.1%.

Study participants were primarily female (96.0%), with a mean age of 51.4 years (SD 7.4, range 34-76). Additional demographic information is displayed in the table below.

**REFERENCES**

- Baccalaureate in nursing as highest level of education
- ED Experience
- Small hospital (less than 100 beds)
- Emergency Certification
- Staffing
- Quality of handover is the degree to which communication results in a clear understanding of factors that influence handover communication
- In order to improve the quality of nurse-to-nurse shift handover in the ED, a clear understanding of factors that influence handover communication is needed. Regression analysis of the hypothesized theoretical model was in progress at the time of paper development. It is hoped that by testing the model using data obtained through nurse surveys, it will be possible to develop evidence-based interventions to improve the quality of nurse-to-nurse handover communication in the ED.

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