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Identifying Factors That Contribute to the Prevalence of Obesity Among Nurses in the Acute Care Setting

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BACKGROUND

Obesity is the most prevalent, yet most controllable health problem threatening society’s health and well-being. Nurses are a first line defense to address this pandemic, however, nurses exhibit higher incidence of obesity than the general population. When nurses are not a role model for the message they are delivering, patient care and outcomes are compromised.

PURPOSE

- Explore current research to evaluate the prevalence of obesity among nurses in the acute care setting.
- Identify the primary causative factors of the high obesity rates within this population.
- Determine the potential impact overweight and obese nurses can have on patient education and the profession itself.
- Recommend possible evidenced-based solutions for the problem.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the most common causative factors of obesity and being overweight among nurses in the acute care setting?
2. What problems do obesity and being overweight pose to acute care nursing?
3. What are strategies to decrease the prevalence of the high rates of obesity and being overweight in acute care nursing?

RESEARCH METHOD

- An integrated literature review was used to analyze the causes, consequences, and solutions to the prevalence of obesity among nurses in the acute care setting.
- Databases searched include CINAHL & Academic Search Complete.
- Search terms: obesity among nurses, obese nurse, overweight nurses, and healthcare worker obesity

RESULTS

A variety of factors contribute to being overweight and obese, but an overwhelming majority of cases appear to be primarily linked to lifestyle habits. The cause of the problem within the nursing profession is a multifaceted issue.

- Unpredictable Schedules
- Diet & Physical Activity
- Job Demands
- Income Level

NURSING IMPLICATIONS

- Nurses exemplifying the message they are providing improves their effectiveness and therefore quality of care.
- Nurses can use this information to improve their health habits and nonverbal message delivery to their patients.
- Increasing awareness and enhancing education can inform nurses on the effects their own health status has on patient outcomes.
- Decreasing the prevalence of overweight and obese nurses will consequently decrease the rates among the general population.

CONCLUSION

- Using nurses as public health models at the forefront of the healthcare system can improve patient outcomes and the health of nursing professionals, as well as advance patient care.
- The improvement of nurses’ health may be more effectively sustained if multiple levels of influence are targeted concurrently.
- There is a need to establish effective strategies to decrease the prevalence of obesity among nurses in the acute care setting.