Perceived importance of access to chaplains and nursing stress

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Chaplains and Nurse Stress Study

**Objectives:**

- By the end of this presentation, attendees will be able to describe one role of hospital-based chaplains that can reduce caregiver stress.
- By the end of the presentation, attendees will be able to detail the relationship between nursing stress and interactions with chaplains since the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Purpose:

To measure differences in nurse-reported stress and perceived importance of access to chaplains two years into a pandemic across a large health system in the United States.
Hospital chaplains contribute to positive outcomes

**Patient Outcomes**

- Improved patient satisfaction and sense of spirituality
- Increased hospice referrals, better likelihood to die at home versus in the hospital

**Caregiver Outcomes**

- Reduced stress, burnout
- Reported increased satisfaction
Gap: does nursing belief about chaplains influence stress?

Nursing Stress

• Higher than average adult in the United States
• Increased during the COVID-19 pandemic
• Unknown whether access to a chaplain influences nursing stress levels
Methods:

- Data from a cross-sectional REDCAP survey
- Study conducted 02/2022 – 04/2022
- Registered Nurses with complete data included
- Variables included responses to perceived stress scale, demographics, and answers to two questions:
  - “Is a chaplain available and present where you work?” (yes/no/I don’t know)
  - “Chaplains are important where I work” (strongly disagree to strongly agree)
- Validated, Perceived stress scale (4-item short form)
  - 0-16 with higher score indicating worse stress levels in the past 7 days
Main Outcome of Interest

• Favorable perception of chaplain presence as important – identified by responses:
  • “Is a chaplain available and present where you work?” – **yes**
  **AND**
  • “Chaplains are important where I work” – **strongly or moderately agree**

• Otherwise categorized as “unfavorable perception of chaplain importance”
Statistical approach

- Descriptive statistics utilized to calculate frequencies and percentages of demographics
- Unpaired samples t-test assuming unequal variances conducted to test differences in average stress score between the two groups of nurses
- Test was two-tailed to remain conservative, and p-value considered significant at p<0.01
- All tests conducted in Excel using a data analysis toolpak add-in
Results

- N=850 nurses were included in analysis

- Most nurses reported a favorable view of chaplain importance (n=544, 64%)

- Proportionally more nurses with favorable view of chaplains worked in critical care settings but not statistically significant ($X^2=3.12, p=0.07$)

- More than 60% of nurses reporting an unfavorable perception of chaplain importance agreed that chaplains are available and present where they work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perceived important (n=544)</th>
<th>Not important (n=306)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X, %</td>
<td>X, %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct care nurse</td>
<td>397 (73.0%)</td>
<td>220 (71.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Care specialty</td>
<td>149 (27.4%)</td>
<td>67 (21.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived chaplain access</td>
<td>544 (100%)</td>
<td>195 (63.75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results:

Significant differences emerged

- Nurses with a highly favorable perceived importance view of chaplain importance and perceived access to a chaplain reported significantly less stress on average (m=5.67) than nurses with a less favorable view (m=6.69)
  - T=-4.14, p<0.001
Conclusion

- Nurses who recognize the presence of Chaplain as important have significantly less stress than those who do not.
- High-level stress may increase burnout which is one factor influencing turnover.
- Do nurses have a clear understanding of the specific services that hospital chaplain could provide for them?
- Chaplains may interact with nurses to support their emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being.
Clinical Implications:

- Chaplains may be perceived as valued resources for nurses, especially during times of heightened stress such as the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Integration of Chaplains with nurses may address stress related to moral dilemmas

- Future work should explore why more nurses with favorable view of chaplain work in critical care specialties compared to other specialties.
  - How can chaplaincy resources be provided equitably at a unit or administrative level to nurses working in all specialties?

- Sample Chaplain Intervention:
  - Virtual chaplain-led sessions created to reduce stress and turnover among Emergency Department and float pool nurses in Oregon
  - A participant shared that it was helpful as it provided a safe environment to process stressful experiences without judgment.
Thank you
References


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