

Job Stress: A Continuing Education Program for Today's Nurse Program Summary

Module 1: Introduction to Nursing Job Stress

Job stress is the physical, emotional, and behavioral response to stressors in the workplace.

Job conditions that may lead to stress: design of tasks, management style, interpersonal relationships, work roles, career concerns, and environmental concerns.

Stressful job conditions are influenced by individual and situational factors, which can influence the risk of disease or illness.

Social support from managers and coworkers is important for reducing the impact of high job demands and low job control.

Module 2: Stressors in the Healthcare Workplace

Demographic trends—the average age of nurses is increasing; patients are older and heavier, on average. Both of these add to the demands of nurses.

In general, chronic diseases are more common in older workers; employers see more claims costs related to cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders. Older workers who get injured have more severe injuries and tend to take longer to recover.

Examples of psychological workplace stressors: unsupportive supervisors, coworker conflicts, bullying or harassment, staffing patterns, unpredictable shifts, excessive time away from family, combative patients, ethical issues related to patient rights

Examples of physical hazards and stressors: fatigue, awkward postures, heavy lifting, chemical agents, bio-hazardous exposures, infectious disease, sharp risks, assault, bright or dim lighting, slippery floors, crowded wires or equipment at bedside

Examples of stressful job characteristics:

- Unrealistic workload
- Excessive paperwork
- Shift work
- Infrequent or no breaks
- Constant sitting
- Unused job skills
- Emotional demands of patient illness and death
- Poor communication
- Mandatory overtime
- Inadequate preparation for treatment modalities
- Lack of educational opportunity

“It was exceptionally informative and I feel that’s exactly what is happening here. I will be giving an in-service on this at our facility.” ---Nurse Participant

Module 3: Impact of Job Stress

On physical health: headache, insomnia, upset stomach, over and under-eating, fatigue, muscle aches and pains, skin rashes, teeth grinding, chronic mild illness, sexual dysfunction, diarrhea/constipation, cardiovascular effects

On mental health: short temper, job dissatisfaction, burnout, low morale, anxiety, depression, angry outbursts, substance abuse, feeling powerless, isolation from coworkers, marital/family problems, workplace violence, difficulty concentrating, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress

On health behaviors: low physical activity levels, consuming too much caffeine, smoking, poor diet, substance abuse (all of which increase risk for cardiovascular disease)

On patient care: medical errors, morbidity mortality, quality of care, patient satisfaction

Module 4: Stress Prevention and Coping Strategies

Individual-level strategies

Practice preventative self-care—eating well, getting adequate sleep, having social outlets.

Take steps to understand deal with stressful aspects of your job (e.g. work processes and relationships).

Organizational-level strategies—3 levels of prevention:

Primary prevention: policies, programs, and practices designed to reduce or eliminate exposures to stressors/hazards. Examples--clear job roles, task variety, learning opportunities.

Secondary prevention: policies, programs, and practices designed to help with early identification and remediation of workplace stressors. This includes assisting employees with managing stressors that do not lend themselves to modification. Examples--stress screenings at health fairs, supervisor training on stress and communication skills, on-site relaxation programs.

Tertiary prevention: treatment of already established stress-related illness. Examples-- employee assistance programs, clinical and rehabilitative care, counseling.

*“Great resource, easy to listen to and follow.
Gave me good tools to deal with work stress!” ---Nurse Participant*

View the program at:

www.uml.edu/Research/Centers/CPH-NEW/nurse-education