

Variations of implicit rationing of nursing care over time – A time-series cross-sectional analysis

Masterarbeit zur Erreichung eines Master of Science in Nursing (MScN)

verfasst von: Anja Renner BScN, RN

Erst- und Zweitbegleitende

1. Lauriane Favez MSc, Institut für Pflegewissenschaft, Medizinische Fakultät, Universität Basel, Schweiz
2. Dr. Dietmar Ausserhofer PhD, RN, Landesfachhochschule für Gesundheitsberufe, Bozen, Italien und Institut für Pflegewissenschaft, Medizinische Fakultät, Universität Basel, Schweiz

Abstract

Background: Implicit rationing of nursing care is a socio-ecological problem where care workers, due to lack of resources, have to leave necessary nursing care activities undone. Cross-sectional studies on implicit rationing of nursing care revealed significant relationships between organizational and work environment characteristics and rationing of nursing care. However, little is known on how implicit rationing of nursing care vary over time.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to describe levels and patterns of implicit rationing of nursing care in nursing homes over time, accounting for variations in key explanatory factors related to organizational, work environment, and individual characteristics.

Design: Time-series cross-sectional analysis.

Setting: Nursing homes in Switzerland.

Participants: A convenience sample of 47 nursing homes, 3269 care workers from all educational levels participated in both multicentre studies (the Swiss Nursing Home Human Resources Project) conducted in 2013 and 2018.

Methods: Data from care workers was collected with established scales to quantify implicit rationing of nursing care (Basel Extent of Rationing of Nursing Care for Nursing homes), and to control for leadership ability, staffing and resource adequacy (Practice Environment Scale of the Nursing Work Index). Objective measures about staffing levels, skill- and grademix, and turnover were measured with self-developed questions. Multiple linear mixed models with time as fixed effect and nursing home as random effect were performed to analyse the data.

Results: Data showed an increase of rationing of care activities over the five-year period studied (beta 0.11-0.23, 95% confidence interval 0.05-0.30), with care activities related to documentation and social activities being rationed more frequently than activities of daily living and caring, rehabilitation, and monitoring in both data collections. Parallely, factors to assess staff-related resources (e.g., skill- and grademix) decreased over time.

Conclusions: Parallel findings of an overall increase of rationing of necessary nursing care activities and a deterioration of staff resources are a worrying trend given their potential negative impact on both residents and care workers. Policy makers and nursing home managers should take it into account to develop sustainable solutions to maintain a high level of quality care in nursing homes.

Keywords: Health Care Rationing, Long-Term Care, Nursing homes, Organization and administration, Rationing of care, Workforce

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