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Creating Opportunities and Occasions to Promote a European Results-based Action for Training and Education – COOPERATE

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Country based needs Assessment facing Covid Crisis (Problems of health-care professionals, health-care organizations)

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1 Summary of the survey

This survey aimed to assess the training needs of staff nurses (n=15) across various age groups (18-54 years old) and educational backgrounds (state-certified nurses for the elderly, healthcare and nursing professionals). The gender breakdown was nearly equal, with seven females and eight males participating.

The survey results indicate a generally strong professional foundation among the nurses surveyed. However, there is an identified need for targeted further training in the following areas:

- **Strengthening psychological resilience and implementing psychological hygiene practices.** This highlights the importance of equipping nurses with strategies to manage stress and maintain emotional well-being in a demanding work environment.
- **Hygiene measures specifically adapted to the SARS-CoV-2 virus.** With the ongoing pandemic, ensuring nurses are updated on the latest infection control protocols for COVID-19 is crucial.
- **Empathy and care in dealing with patients, staff, and oneself.** This area underscores the importance of fostering compassionate care not just for patients but also for colleagues and for personal well-being.

By focusing on these specific training areas, healthcare institutions can enhance the overall well-being and effectiveness of their nursing staff.

2 Summary of Geriatric and Healthcare Nurse Interviews

Methodology

Two nurses (one geriatric, one healthcare) participated in individual, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour each. Interviews were conducted in a calm and undisturbed environment to ensure accurate data collection and open communication.

Impact of the Pandemic on Nursing Work

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the nurses' daily routines and well-being. The constant need for SARS-CoV-2 testing for staff, patients, and relatives added substantial time demands to their already overloaded schedules. This, coupled with concerns about the



physical and psychological well-being of patients, staff, and themselves, led to a heightened sense of stress and anxiety. These factors ultimately contributed to decreased resilience and could negatively impact the nurses' overall health.

Impact of Mandatory Vaccination

The government's mandatory vaccination policy for healthcare workers introduced a new layer of complexity. While intended to protect patients and staff, it caused uncertainty among some nurses and exacerbated existing staff shortages. Unvaccinated personnel were barred from facilities, and some staff chose to resign rather than comply with the mandate. This resulted in further workload compression, placing additional burdens on remaining staff and managers.

Physical and Psychological Effects

The aforementioned stressors significantly impacted the nurses' mental and physical health. The increased workload, constant concern for themselves and others, and potential fear of contracting the virus contributed to higher mental strain and stress levels. This could manifest in various negative health outcomes, including anxiety, burnout, depression, and sleep disorders. In some cases, nurses experienced long-term illnesses due to contracting SARS-CoV-2, and the lingering effects of "Long Covid" further compounded these challenges.

Organizational Responses

Healthcare organizations implemented various measures to mitigate the pandemic's impact and support their nursing staff. Stringent hygiene protocols aligned with recommendations from the RKI (Robert Koch Institute) and health authorities became the norm. Regular testing for SARS-CoV-2 was conducted on staff, visitors, and patients based on suspicion. Additionally, facility-based mandatory vaccination was enforced to create a safer environment and contain the spread of the virus.

To address the increased workload and psychological strain, organizations adopted several staff support initiatives. These included adjustments to staff scheduling to create a better work-life balance, thematically organized staff consultations to foster communication and address concerns, case discussions for peer support and problem-solving, and supervision



to provide guidance and support. Furthermore, some organizations implemented incentive programs, such as bonus systems, to recognize the exceptional efforts of their nursing staff during this challenging time.

Continuing Education:

The interviews reaffirmed the ongoing importance of professional development and continuing education in nursing practice. While the survey did not identify significant professional training deficiencies, staying up-to-date on best practices and emerging knowledge is crucial for nurses to deliver high-quality care, especially in the ever-evolving healthcare landscape.

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the pandemic has posed great challenges to the healthcare system and related care. The experiences of these nurses highlight the significant impact of COVID-19 on their daily work, well-being, and ultimately, the quality of care provided.

A needs-based approach to staffing, ongoing research, and consistent implementation of research findings into daily practices will form a strong foundation for managing future pandemics and their consequences. By leveraging the lessons learned from this experience, healthcare institutions can be better prepared to respond effectively and support their staff during future crises.

As a measure to improve professional training and address potential skill gaps, targeted training programs should be implemented. These programs could focus on:

Strengthening mental resilience and implementing mental hygiene practices to equip nurses with strategies to manage stress and maintain emotional well-being.

Hygiene measures specifically adapted to the SARS-CoV-2 virus to ensure nurses are updated on the latest infection control protocols for COVID-19 and other emerging pathogens.

Empathy and care in dealing with patients, staff, and oneself to foster compassionate care at all levels and promote the well-being of both patients and caregivers.



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Work organization, staff scheduling, and dealing with the special challenges of a pandemic at all relevant levels, tailored to crisis situations.

By prioritizing these training areas and adopting a needs-based approach to staffing and support, healthcare institutions can build resilience within their nursing workforce and ensure the continued delivery of high-quality care during future crises.