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Primary Health Care Nurses' Experienced Stress at Team Level

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Background. Stress is a complex phenomenon which results from an interaction between individuals and their work environment, local forces, pressures and culture, and this often requires customized interventions. Recent changes and increased demands in primary health care may result in highly stressed nursing teams. From viewpoint of management, it should be noticed that stressed teams may not have the potential to work and operate effectively, which undoubtedly has an impact on the delivery of nursing care.

Aim of this study is to describe experienced stress in nursing teams working in primary health care.

Methods. A descriptive study using an Expanded Nursing Stress Scale (ENSS) for data collection was undertaken. 29 teams from 18 public primary health care centers of one Lithuanian county participated. A total of 187 nurses completed the questionnaire.

Results. The stress experienced by nurses depends on the team. Study results reveal both individual and team level stress. The effect of the team size is moderate, but the background factors of the teams had little association with the sub-categories of stress. Workload tended to cause more stress in larger teams. At the nurses' team level, a strong positive correlation was found between all of the stress sub-category areas investigated, except for that of "discrimination". Different teams followed different stress profiles, but based on their common features, various clusters were identified which should be noticed by management.

Conclusions. In particular, interventions that will help build interpersonal relationships, develop conflict resolution skills, and which develop our understanding of the role that effective teamwork has in lessening work-related stress are required.

Keywords: primary health care, nurses, stress, team

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