D4.5: Older Nurses Experiences of Working with a Health Problem (Presenteeism)

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Abstract:
Introduction: Presenteeism is defined as when an employee shows up for work, but because of mental or physical illness does not function productively or at 100% of capability. The National Institute on Aging (2007) reports that 20 percent of men and 25 percent of women ages 50 to 64 report a health problem that limits their work activity. The Institute for Health and Productivity Management Studies (2006) found that the major causes of presenteeism are mental health issues (primarily depression) and musculoskeletal problems (low back pain and arthritis). Little is known about how depression and musculoskeletal pain impact work productivity (including patient safety) and work experiences for older RNs over the age of 50. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenologic study was to describe the experiences of older nurses who work at the bedside with depression and/or musculoskeletal pain.

Method(s): An empirical, transcendental phenomenological (Moustakas, 1994) approach was used for this study. Two audio-recorded interviews were conducted with each participant: one face-to-face indepth interview and a second telephone interview one week later. Atlas Ti software was utilized and analysis was guided by Moustakas’s (1994) procedural steps.

Results: The participants in the study included 13 females and one male RN who ranged in age from 50-65 years (mean of 57 years). Thirteen of the participants were Caucasian and one was African American. Years of experience as a RN ranged from 13 to 37 years (mean = 27.9 years). Nine of the nurses experienced both musculoskeletal pain and depression and five experienced only musculoskeletal pain. None of the participants experienced only depression. Years working with a health problem ranged from two years to twenty years (mean = 8.3 years). Analysis of
data was guided by Mayeroff’s philosophy of Caring. Four themes emerged from the data analysis. The themes were: It hurts every day, nursing changed, learning to cope, and team support.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Study findings demonstrate the need for increased caring for nurses who work with their own health problems and have spent their careers caring for others. These nurses may be especially vulnerable during difficult economic times when work environments are more stressful and employers have decreased resources for employee support.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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