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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Essential elements of professional nursing environments in Primary Care and their influence on the quality of care[☆]

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KEYWORDS

Nursing;
Primary health care;
Working conditions;
Quality improvement;
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Abstract

Objectives: Nursing work environments are key determinants of care quality. Our study aimed to evaluate the characteristics of nursing environments in primary care settings in the Canary Islands, and identify crucial components of such environments to improve quality.

Method: We conducted a cross-sectional study in primary care organisations using the Practice Environment Scale – Nursing Work Index tool. We collected sociodemographic variables, scores, and selected the essential items conducive to optimal care. Appropriate parametric and non-parametric statistical tests were used to analyse relations between variables (CI = 95%, error = 5%).

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Results: One hundred and forty-four nurses participated. The mean total score was 81.6. The results for the five dimensions included in the Practice Environment Scale – Nursing Work Index ranged from 2.25 to 2.92 (Mean). Twelve key items for quality of care were selected; six were positive in the Canary Islands, two were mixed, and four negative. 7/12 items were included in dimension 2 (fundamentals of nursing). Being a manager was statistically associated with higher scores ($p < .000$). Years of experience was inversely associated with scores in the 12 items ($p < .021$).

Conclusions: Nursing work environments in primary care settings in the Canary Islands are comparable to others previously studied in Spain. Areas to improve were human resources and participation of nurses in management decisions. Nurse managers must be knowledgeable about their working environments so they can focus on improvements in key dimensions.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

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Atención Primaria;
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Mejoramiento de la
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Calidad de la
atención de salud

Elementos esenciales de los entornos profesionales enfermeros en Atención Primaria y su influencia en la calidad del cuidado

Resumen

Objetivos: Conocida su influencia sobre la calidad del cuidado, pretendemos con nuestro estudio valorar las características de los entornos profesionales enfermeros en Atención Primaria de Salud de la Comunidad Canaria, y determinar cuáles son los elementos clave de dichos entornos para mejorar la calidad del cuidado.

Método: Estudio observacional, transversal, analítico, en Atención Primaria de Salud de Canarias, con el cuestionario Practice Environment Scale - Nursing Work Index. Se midieron variables sociodemográficas, puntuaciones en el test, y se seleccionaron los ítems fundamentales que las enfermeras consideran que facilitan prestar cuidados de calidad. Se valoró la normalidad de la muestra, y se calcularon estadísticos no paramétricos y paramétricos para analizar la relación entre variables (IC=95% error=5%).

Resultados: Participaron 144 enfermeras. Puntuación media total = 81,6. Las 5 dimensiones oscilaron entre puntuaciones medias de 2,25-2,92 (rango 1 a 4). Se seleccionaron 12 elementos clave para mejorar los cuidados: 6 fueron positivos en Canarias, 2 mixtos, y 4 negativos. Siete de los 12 elementos pertenecen a la dimensión 2 (fundamentos enfermeros). Ser coordinadora mostró significación ($p < 0,000$) con mayores puntuaciones. Años de experiencia mostró significación ($p < 0,021$) con la puntuación obtenida en los 12 elementos clave, más alta a menor experiencia.

Conclusiones: Los entornos en Atención Primaria de Salud de Canarias son similares a los antecedentes en España. Como áreas de mejora: recursos humanos y participación de las enfermeras en la gestión. Los gestores enfermeros deben conocer sus entornos, implantando cambios prioritariamente sobre los elementos esenciales.

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Introduction

Magnetism in health originates in 1983 in United States (U.S.A.) from a study which concluded that several forces and elements exist to foster the retention of nurses in their companies, and to prevent the loss of professionals.¹ The said “magnetic” centres get better patient results, with higher safety and fewer undesirable complications²⁻⁴ providing excellent environments for professional nursing practice.^{4,5}

In view of these benefits, tools were developed to measure the professional nursing practice environments (PNPE) in U.S.A. and they have slowly been adapted and validated in many countries to be used in health centres. Two of these PNPE are of particular interest to our study: the Practice

Environment Scale of the Nursing Work Index (PES-NWI)⁶ and the Essentials of Magnetism (EOM), in versions 1 and 2.⁵⁻⁷ The most widely used tool with the best methodological results for assessing these environments is the Practice Environment Scale of the Nursing Work Index (PES-NWI),^{8,9} adapted and validated in Spain specifically for primary health care attention (PHC).¹⁰

In addition to helping develop with PNPE measurements with the EOM questionnaire, the authors requested that the nurses select the items from those proposed which they deemed to be the most important attributes for improving patient care in hospital environments of the U.S.A. They selected 10 (“essential”) items of which 8 covered that greatest part of variance. In his conclusions, Kramer proposed⁷ which were the most important factors of the

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