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Interventions That Reduce Burnout and Stress among Bedside Nurses



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ABSTRACT

Background: Burnout and work-place stress are ever-increasing, which are causing nurses to leave the profession permanently. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to review the literature to determine if interventions placed in hospital settings reduce stress and burnout among nurses at the bedside. **Method:** The method used was a systematic review of the literature. The population, implication, comparison, outcome, and time (PICOT) question was: *What are interventions that help reduce stress and burnout among nurses who work at the bedside?* **Findings:** Results indicated a reduction in burnout and work-place stress when interventions such as mindfulness techniques, yoga sessions, and self-care activities were introduced in the healthcare setting. **Conclusion:** Recommendations are for healthcare leaders to focus on implementing interventions to decrease stress and burnout among bedside nurses. By reducing burnout and stress, nurses would be less likely to leave the bedside or the profession permanently.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing is among one of the most in-demand fields. Based on reports from the American Nurses Association [1], hospitals throughout the United States are faced with more acute and sicker patients, yet do not have enough nurses to staff the units to care for the high number of patients. Nursing schools throughout the nation have fewer spots within their classes, thus is creating an ever-growing gap between the supply and demand of nurses across the United States. The shortage of nurses is causing the nurses to have more work than they can handle, such as poor nurse-patient ratios, which is causing nurses to feel stretched thin to provide adequate and satisfactory patient care. With these shortages, nurses are feeling overworked which is leading nurses to feel burned out and highly stressed within the hospital. Burnout is a state of physical or emotional exhaustion which involves a sense of reduced achievement and personal identity loss [1]. Around 49% of nurses under the age of 30 and 40% of nurses over the age of 30 have experienced burnout [2]. Prolonged feelings of burnout and stress within work are causing nurses across the nation to want to leave bedside nursing or the profession permanently [1]. The purpose of this study was to review the literature to determine if interventions placed in hospital settings reduce stress and burnout among nurses working at the bedside. The PICOT question was: *What are interventions that help reduce stress and burnout among nurses who work at the bedside?*

2. METHODOLOGY

The literature review was completed with careful inspection and analysis using the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) and PubMed databases. Applying the search terms *nurse burnout* and *burnout interventions*, plenty of peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles were freely available. The literature selected for review were published from January 2015 through November 2019, carefully analyzed, and efficiently pieced for appropriate evidence-based review. Articles included in the review were analyzed for the level of evidence (LOE), using only the top four tiers of the evidence hierarchy. Level of evidence is classified as followed: Level I, systematic review or meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials (RCTs); Level II, well designed RCT (large and multisite trials); Level III, well designed controlled trial without randomization; Level IV, well-designed case-control or cohort study; Level V, a systematic review of descriptive or qualitative studies; Level VI, descriptive or qualitative studies, Level VII, opinion of authorities and/or reports of expert committees [3]. This is discussed further in Figure 1.

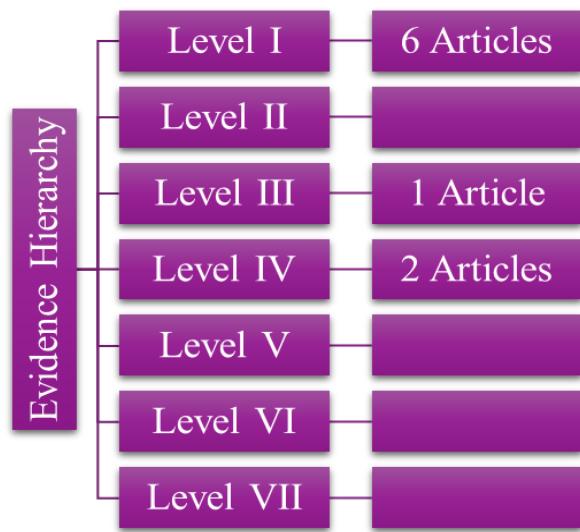


Figure no 1. Level of evidence for articles used in the study entitled interventions to reduce burnout and stress among bedside nurses.

Note. For the level of evidence, 1 is the highest and 7 is the lowest.

The initial search resulted in 24,942 articles. After analyzing them according to the criteria listed above, 9 studies were selected for further review, as shown in Figure 2.

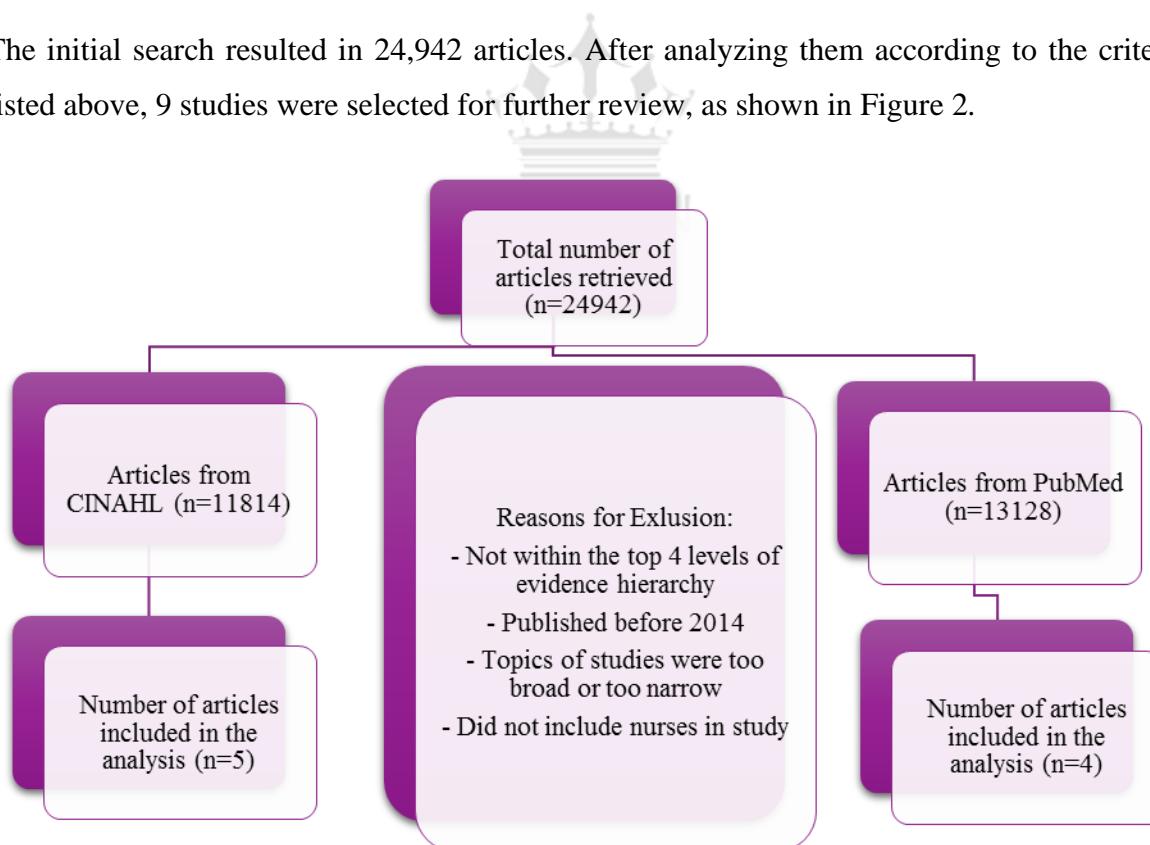


Figure no 2. Research article inclusion flowchart for interventions to reduce burnout and stress among bedside nurses.

3. FINDINGS

Data to support interventions reducing burnout and stress among bedside nurses were limited. However, throughout the review of the literature, common themes discovered included mindfulness techniques, yoga sessions, and self-care activities. These interventions were found to be successful in reducing stress and burnout among nurses. Themes discovered are shown in Figure 3.

3.1 Mindfulness Reducing Stress and Burnout Among Bedside Nurses

Mindfulness is a form of meditation on which you concentrate, without interpretation or judgment, on being fully conscious of what you are thinking and experiencing now. This technique has many benefits, including boosting overall mental health. Of the 9 studies, 6 articles [4 -8] revealed strong evidence that mindfulness interventions helped to reduce work stress and burnout. Two studies [6, 9] shared similar findings. Aryankhesal et al. [4] found that implementing mindfulness techniques such as workplace thankfulness, open coworker discussion, and how to cope with workplace events found a significant decrease in overall stress among both nurses and physicians included in the study. Chesak et al. [5] found in their study that mindfulness techniques including co-worker communication skills and education on how to perform mindfulness techniques had significant improvements in the mood of nurses and a decrease in emotional exhaustion and feelings of burnout. Two studies [6, 9] found that there is a correlation between nurses applying mindfulness techniques at work and feelings of improved mood and a decrease in their feelings of stress within the hospital setting.

There were 2 experimental studies [7, 8] that evaluated mindfulness interventions among nurses working at hospitals. Montanari et al. [7] conducted a study over an 8-week time frame and found that techniques including a guided program disk, sound machines, journaling, and journaling prompts, and demonstrating breathing exercises showed significant results. The nurses in this study reported feelings of decreased stress and decreased feelings of burnout after utilizing the methods provided within the hospital. Vaclavik et al. [8] conducted a study over a 2-week time frame and found in their study that implementing areas to prompt mindfulness and communication decreased workplace stress and burnout. Interventions that were introduced included co-worker debriefing periods after high-intensity situations and using a tree-of-life, which remembers and reflects upon patients who passed

away. Nurses included in this study found these interventions to be extremely beneficial and reported they felt a decrease in their feelings of moral distress, burnout, and overall work stress. These articles and studies were helping in answering the PICOT question by showing evidence that mindfulness is beneficial for nurses. Allowing time to stop and process the present time and taking a moment for one's self is productive in reducing overall work stress.

3.2 Yoga Decreasing Burnout and Strong Among Bedside Nurses

Yoga has been around for about 5,000 years. It has many benefits including a reduction of stress, an increase in flexibility, and protection from injury by strengthening muscles and increasing muscle tone [10]. Two articles [10, 11] found evidence that offering yoga sessions can reduce work stress and burnout. In their study, Lynes [11] implemented a 30-minute laughter yoga session over 8 weeks. Nurses in the study were receptive to the yoga sessions and found it to be beneficial. Of the nurses in the study, 74% of those who participated in the study would like to see the laughter yoga implemented more as they found it had helped with their stress and mood. Alexander et al. [10] conducted an RCT involving implementing an 8-week yoga program. The nurses involved in the trial group found yoga to be very beneficial and reported decreased feelings of stress as well as emotional exhaustion. These studies answered the PICOT question by showing that yoga is beneficial in reducing stress and burnout among nurses.

3.3 Self-Care Activities Reducing Stress and Burnout

Self-care involves any activity that is done that improves and takes care of a person's mental, emotional, and physical health. It can involve something as simple as taking a break and drinking a glass of water or eating a snack. Performing self-care activities are beneficial to relieving stress and improving overall mental health. In their study, De Oliveira et al. [12] implemented a program involving a physical activity incentive for nurses that involved 12 hours of weekly exercise as well as information on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, nutrition, and adequate sleep. The program was effective in reducing the prevalence of overweight in the participating nurses after the program ended. Exercise and maintaining an overall healthy lifestyle are components in reducing burnout. Educating nurses on how to accomplish lifestyle changes was found to be beneficial. This study answered the PICOT question by demonstrating that self-care is beneficial in reducing burnout and stress among bedside nurses.

3.4 Summary of Findings

To decrease the burnout among the nurses there have been interventions in the collected data. These literature findings indicated different interventions placed to aid the prevention, reduction, and compassion fatigue among bedside nurses. However, more research is needed to help the nurses determine what healthy interventions best work for them such as yoga, meditation techniques, self-care, communication skills (see Figure 3).

The findings from the review focused on 9 peer-reviewed articles. Of the 9 articles, only a few had frameworks specifically listed in the literature. However, the articles were found to be a collection of different methods and designs. Designs ranging from systematic literature reviews [4-6, 9] and mixed methods research [7] to mixed-method quasi-experimental (pre-/posttest intervention with nonequivalent groups) designs [8, 11], integrative review of literature [12] and randomized control trials [10].

In the randomized controlled trial, there were 40 nurses, of which 20 participated and 20 did not participate [10]. In the mixed method quasi-experimental (pre-/posttest intervention with a nonequivalent group) design, 80 nurses had enrolled to be part of the study however only 50 nurses completed the laughter yoga study. Nineteen were in the intervention group and 31 in the comparison group [11]. For the mixed methods research, 50 nurses completed the presurvey and 32 completed the post-survey. Of these, 26 completed both phases of surveys, ranging from ages 29-31 years and all had more than one year of nursing experience [7].

The overall findings were helpful for the PICOT question, what are interventions that help reduce stress and burnout among nurses who work at the bedside? These articles stated the different types of interventions that can prevent and reduce burnout among bedside nurses. The focus of all these interventions is that the nurse must care for themselves and should not be afraid to ask for help.

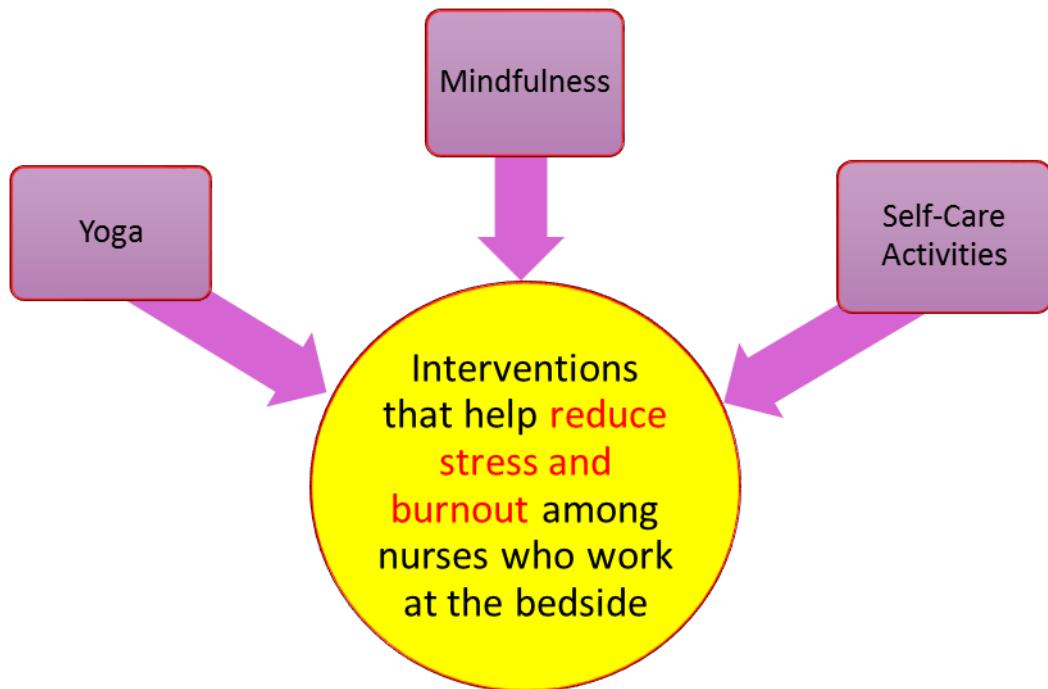


Figure no 3. Emerging themes for interventions that help reduce burnout and stress among bedside nurses.

4. DISCUSSION

Self-care is an essential health practice that contributes to the movement of decreasing the amount of burnout and compassion fatigue experienced by health care professionals, and in specifics to this review, bedside nurses. Psychological skills training including, mindfulness-based and meditation training, coping/stress/resilience training, and physical stress reduction techniques, such as massage therapy and yoga, are the interventions that were proven most effective among nurses participating in the studies reviewed for this paper. In the current stressful and actively changing health environment, it is vital for health care professionals, especially nurses, to identify and alleviate the impact of stress on themselves and the care they provide to each of their patients [5]. The ANA [13] reports that the well-being of nurses is fundamental to the health of our nation, yet the health care environment remains stressful for nurses, which is leading more nurses desiring for implements of change to reduce their stress and feelings of burnout.

Highlighted within holistic nursing is the core value that nurses must recognize the need to implement self-care techniques and healthful behaviors into their lives. Nurses will feel and function better when a sense of well-being is achieved, as well as being able to provide

higher-quality care [5]. The goal is to encourage nurses to promote a sense of overall well-being within themselves, so they can pass that along through the delivery of care to patients. Implications could be placed to find out what interventions could be done to decrease burnout experienced by healthcare workers through the health care facilities providing educational classes focused on self-care, healthful behavioral techniques and ways to explore the reduction of stress to achieve a sense of overall well-being among all health care professionals, especially nurses. Hospitals should continue focusing on providing excellent care for patients but should not forget to care for the nurses who are providing the care. Providing areas utilizing interventions mentioned above could promote a work environment that is less stressful and prone to produce feelings of burnout. Educating nurses as well as other hospital care providers on utilizing these various methods could be beneficial as well.

4.1 Strengths of the Study

The strengths of the study were the level of evidence that was reviewed. Throughout the various studies, there were positive responses to the interventions introduced. The majority of studies found evidence that implementing interventions such as mindfulness, self-care activities, and yoga reduced the overall stress and feelings of burnout in nurses.

4.2 Weaknesses of the Study

Every study is not without its weaknesses. Although there was strong evidence supporting that there are interventions to reduce burnout and stress among nurses, there is still not a lot of relevant research available. The studies that were done were small in sample size, thus more testing and research is recommended to better evaluate this further.

5. CONCLUSION

There is evidence that shows that mindfulness, self-care activities, and yoga can reduce stress and burnout among nurses. However, there is still not a lot of research available and this topic should be researched further to gather more evidence for relevant and productive interventions. Nurses are feeling the impacts of the nursing shortage and are feeling stressed and burned out, causing them to leave the profession. Nurses care for others every day but should not forget to care for themselves. Hospitals should desire to further research on more methods to reduce burnout and stress, which would hopefully reduce the nursing shortage as more nurses would desire to stay. If nurses are less stressed and do not feel burned out, they

will likely be more satisfied with their job, patients will receive quality care from a nurse who is not burdened with work stress and work exhaustion. Hospitals across the United States should begin a focus on implementing interventions to decrease stress and burnout among nurses. By reducing burnout and stress, nurses across the nation would not desire to leave the profession permanently.

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