PREPARING NURSES FOR SHIFTWORK: CHALLENGE AND ISSUES IN PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION AND THE WORKPLACE.
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Abstract Content:
Nursing has always had a tradition, born of the requirement for 24 hour nursing care, of shiftwork which is regulated by workplace and industrial agreements. Knowledge about shiftwork has been developed through research with two main approaches: organisational and personal. Organisational research has focused on management of shiftwork to gain optimal work output. Personal research in shiftwork focuses on the impact of shiftwork on the physiological and psychological health of nurses involved in shiftwork.

Poor shiftwork tolerance has the potential to affect quality of care for patients and staff morale. In addition, lack of understanding of how to manage shiftwork may also contribute to feelings of social isolation, depression, burnout and staff attrition. Staff attrition and a high staff turnover, from an organisation’s perspective, is costly, affects access to quality health care and is an essential nursing workforce and workplace issue.

Despite the plethora of shiftwork literature, there is minimal nursing education about adaptation to shiftwork in either university pre-service degrees, in orientation to the workforce or in clinical in-service education. Shiftwork education and its value both in pre-service degrees and within the clinical area is an important discussion that both educators and managers need to address.

This paper will provide an overview of the literature on the impact of shiftwork and argue for essential education of the nursing workforce and healthcare workplaces in order to maximise healthy and productive shiftwork.