

Social network analysis of peer-specific safety support and ergonomic behaviors: An application to safe patient handling

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Healthcare Administrators, Healthcare Educators, Healthcare Researchers

ABSTRACT: Despite the effectiveness of safe patient handling programs, nurses remain at an elevated risk for musculo-skeletal disorders in the workplace compromising their health and the health of patients in addition to days missed from work and worker's compensation claims. There is a marked increase in research mapping the social networks and social support of nurses, particularly how network characteristics correlate with health outcomes. This cross sectional study of patient-care workers (n=39) at a community hospital in Oregon investigates whether patterns of peer-based interactions regarding safe patient handling correlate with higher or lower frequency of safe patient handling equipment utilization. Results demonstrate a positive correlation between identifying more peers for safe patient handling advice and using equipment more frequently. Moreover, nurses with more reciprocal advice seeking nominations used safe patient handling equipment more frequently. However, employees more likely to be consulted about safe patient handling did not average more frequent equipment usage than nurses with fewer nominations. Despite the small sample size, the magnitude of the adjusted regressions coefficients ranged between .3 to .4 standard deviations. These results suggest that having more or mutual sources of peer-based support may trigger ergonomic related behaviors such as frequent utilization of equipment.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Assess network characteristics and communication patterns within an organization
- Compare which network characteristics may impact key outcomes at an organization with potential to develop an intervention that maximizes reciprocal communication patterns

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