

Research In Action: Completed Projects

This fact sheet is the fifth in a series of fact sheets that highlight findings from a research study entitled “Exploring Worklife Issues in Provincial Correctional Settings”. The research team led by Drs. Diane Doran and Joan Almost includes Linda Ogilvie, Crystal Miller, Shirley Kennedy, Carol Timmings, Don Rose, Mae Squires, Charlotte Lee and Sue Bookey-Bassett. The study was conducted at the Lawrence S. Bloomberg, Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The full report is available on our website at: www.nhsru.com.

Research Background & Purpose

Correctional nurses hold unique positions within the nursing profession as their role and work environment combine the demands of two systems, corrections and health care. However there has been limited research regarding this unique nurse population. This study aimed to explore the worklife issues for nurses in provincial correctional settings in Ontario and their effects on recruitment and retention. A mixed methods research design guided this study which was conducted in two phases: Phase 1 involved interviews with 17 nurses, health care managers and superintendents working in Ontario correctional facilities. In Phase two, surveys were distributed to all 511 nurses and health care managers working in provincial corrections facilities throughout Ontario. Two hundred and ninety-eight surveys were returned for a response rate of 59%.

Previous fact sheets provided an overview of correctional nurses’ demographics, practice environment, workplace relationships and workplace outcomes. This final fact sheet compares key study findings with those reported in other studies with nurses in Ontario.

Demographic Characteristics

- Nurses working in provincial correctional facilities in Ontario are similar in age (46.0 years) to nurses working in other sectors in Ontario (46.1 years) (CNO, 2008). However, as shown in Table 1, nurses working in correctional settings have a higher percentage of males, a lower percentage of full-time nurses and a higher percentage of unclassified (casual) nurses.

Table 1: Demographics

	Correctional Nurses	CNO (all sectors) (2008)
Gender		
Female	83.8%	95.4%
Male	16.2%	4.6%
Employment Status		
Classified Full-Time	50.8%	64.7%
Classified Part-Time	4.9%	27.2%
Unclassified	44.4%	8.1%

Table 2: Practice Environment

	Correctional Nurses Mean (SD)	NSWHN (Shields, 2006) Mean	Laschinger (2001, 2008) Mean (SD)
Paid Overtime in Hours	7.16 (6.47)	4.8	-
Unpaid Overtime in Hours	1.49 (2.16)	4.0	-
Autonomy*	2.61 (.61)	-	2.59 (.27)
Control over Practice*	2.22 (.64)	-	2.34 (.28)
Access to Resources#	2.76 (.72)	-	2.98 (.79)
Felt Staffing was Inadequate	36.2%	38.8%	-

*Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree; 4=strongly agree). High score indicates high level of construct.

Likert Scale 1 ‘none’ 3 ‘sometimes’ 5 ‘a lot’. High score indicates high level of construct.

Practice Environment

As shown in Table 2, correctional nurses reported:

- A higher amount of paid overtime but less unpaid overtime than the general nursing population in the National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses (NSWHN) (Shields, 2006).
- A similar level of autonomy but lower control over their practice in comparison to a large Ontario sample of acute care nurses (Laschinger et al., 2001).
- Less access to resources than nurses working in acute care hospitals (Laschinger, 2008).
- A similar perception of inadequate staffing (36.2%) as the general nursing population in the NSWHN (38.8%) (Shields, 2006).

Table 3: Workplace Relationships

	Correctional Nurses	NSWHN (Shields, 2006)	Almost (2010)	Laschinger (2008)
Experienced Emotional Abuse (inmates)	63.1%	44.9%	-	-
Experienced Emotional Abuse (someone other than inmates)	55.6%	8.7%-16.9% across sectors	-	-
Experienced Physical Abuse (inmates)	3.7%	28.4%	-	-
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Relationship Conflict [^]	2.86 (.93)	-	2.39 (.60)	-
Nurse-Physician Collaboration [*]	3.06 (.69)	-	-	2.99 (.68)

[^]Likert Scale (1=never; 5=always). High score indicates high level of conflict.

^{*} Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree; 4=strongly agree). High score indicates high collaboration.

Workplace Relationships

As shown in Table 3, correctional nurses reported:

- More emotional abuse from inmates and someone other than inmates but less physical abuse from inmates (clients) than the general nursing population in the NSWHN (Shields, 2006).
- More relationship conflict than nurses in acute care hospitals (Almost, 2010).
- Similar levels of collaboration with physicians as acute care nurses (Laschinger, 2008).

Workplace Outcomes

As shown in Table 4, correctional nurses reported:

- Feeling satisfied with their jobs. However, 27% reported feeling dissatisfied with their current job, which is greater than the general nursing population in the NSWHN (Shields, 2006).
- A slightly higher intent to stay in current position than nurses in acute care (Tourangeau et al., 2005).
- Lower levels of emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment with higher levels of depersonalization than nurses in acute care (Tourangeau et al., 2005).
- Lower levels of role overload than the general nursing population in the NSWHN (Shields, 2006).
- A slightly lower rating of quality of care than nurses in acute care (Tourangeau et al., 2005).

Table 4: Workplace Outcomes

	Correctional Nurses	NSWHN (Shields, 2006)	Tourangeau et al. (2005)
Dissatisfied with Job	27.0%	12.5%	-
Intent to Stay	80.8%	-	78.6%
	Mean (SD)	Mean	Mean (SD)
Emotional Exhaustion [#]	22.67 (12.20)	-	24.1 (11.1)
Personal Accomplishment ⁺	33.77 (8.11)	-	37.7 (6.7)
Depersonalization [*]	7.35 (6.30)	-	5.4 (5.0)
Role Overload ^{##}	11.01 (4.88)	12.2	-
Quality of Care ⁺⁺	3.10 (.67)	-	3.4 (.58)

[#]Sum range: 0-54. High score indicates high burnout.

⁺Sum range: 0-48. Low score indicates high burnout.

^{*}Sum range: 0-30. High score indicates high burnout.

^{##}Sum range: 0-20. High score indicates high role overload.

⁺⁺ Likert Scale (1=poor; 4=excellent). High score indicates high quality of care.

Conclusions

- As shown in this fact sheet, correctional nurses reported less control over their practice, less access to resources, more emotional abuse and relationship conflict, more dissatisfaction with their job, higher levels of depersonalization, lower personal accomplishment, and lower quality of care than nurses in other sectors.
- However, correctional nurses reported similar levels of autonomy, overtime, perception of inadequate staffing, collaboration with physicians, as well as lower levels of emotional exhaustion, role overload, and higher intent to stay in their job than nurses in other sectors.
- Overall, correctional nurses in this study identified several key issues within their work environment including inadequate staffing and heavy workload, limited control over practice, limited resources, and challenging workplace relationships. Work environment interventions are needed to address these issues and, subsequently, increase job satisfaction, prevent burnout, and role overload.

Additional fact sheets are available that highlight other factors within the correctional work environment.