KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to identify issues related to human factors contributing to nursing errors and collect perceptions of likely causes of errors from nurses' perspectives. Also examined were nurses' perceptions on the ability to intervene and the importance and commonness associated with human factors contributing to human errors.

Hospital Nurses' Perceptions of Human Factors Contributing to Nursing Errors

Key Concepts/Context

This study built upon results from a previous study. The aim was to understand details about how human factors contribute to nursing errors.

Methods

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive design to survey approximately 1,808 registered nurses across a large magnet hospital system. The online survey confirmed 24 themes previously identified in a previous study by the primary author. Some 393 participants responded to the survey (21.74% response rate) which asked four questions about 24 items.
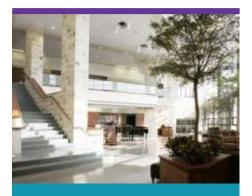
Findings

Four human factor themes were identified to be related to nursing errors. Loss of focus including distractions, interruptions, technology problems, being placed in unfamiliar circumstances, and inattentional blindness were identified as likely to cause a nursing error. Unhealthy environments including dissatisfaction with the work environment, poor work cultures, ineffective or incorrect policies and procedures, nurses who work while ill, and a culture of nurse apathy were also identified as likely to cause a nursing error. Interpersonal deficits including nurses who were chemically impaired, poor communication, lack of critical thinking, and the perception that nurses were expected to recognize and correct the errors of others make up the third theme as likely causes of nursing errors. Finally, the perception of feeling overwhelmed was characterized as being fatigued, working too many hours, feeling swamped, and increased documentation requirements.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

This study provides insights on nursing errors from the clinician perspective. The findings can be used to develop strategies to reduce errors in the nursing workplace and to discover design strategies to mitigate elements contributing to nursing errors.

Limitations

The single hospital design, low response rate, and the fact that the study was conducted within a magnet hospital context limits the generalizability of the findings.

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