

The Role of Schedule Volatility in Home Health Nursing Turnover

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Issue

In 2015, over 4.5 million patients in the U.S. received home health care from over 12,000 home health care agencies. Despite considerable research on nursing turnover, few studies have considered turnover among nurses working in home health care. This study examined turnover among home health nurses, focusing on the role of schedule volatility.

Data

We analyzed novel administrative data from one of the largest home health care organizations in the United States.

Methods

We estimated separation rates among full-time and part-time registered nurses and licensed practical nurses and used daily visit logs to estimate schedule volatility, which was defined as the coefficient of variation of the number of daily visits in the prior four weeks.

Results

Between 2016 and 2019, the average annual separation rate of home health nurses was over 30%, with most separations occurring voluntarily. Turnover rates were higher for part-time nurses than full-time nurses. Schedule volatility and turnover were positively associated for full-time nurses, but not for part-time nurses.

Conclusions

Nursing turnover in home health care may compromise patient care in a variety of ways, including reduced average experience of staff, increased inconsistency when implementing care plans, disruptions in the detection of complications, and less supervision and training. Reducing schedule volatility for full-time nurses could mitigate nursing turnover and improve the quality of care in home health care.

Key Words: home health, turnover, registered nurses, licensed nurses

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