

Evidence Headlines

March 2015

Nursing skill mix and staffing levels for safe patient care



Nurse skill mix and staffing levels

- Nursing is central to considerations about how hospital care should be provided effectively and safely.

Impact on patient outcomes

- Higher nurse staffing levels and a higher proportion of registered nurses are associated with lower rates of mortality and may be associated with lower rates of patient falls and pressure ulcers.
- A higher proportion of registered nurses may be associated with lower rates of some types of hospital acquired infection.
- A lower level of nurse staffing is probably associated with higher rates of drug administration errors and missed nursing care.

Impact on patient care costs

- Lower hospital use is associated with higher nurse staffing levels and possibly with a richer registered nurse skill mix.
- Increases in nurse staffing and/or a richer skill mix have the potential to be cost-effective.