

How Validated Nursing Workload and Patient Acuity Data Can Promote Sustained Change and Improvements within District Health Boards. the New Zealand Experience

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Abstract : In the New Zealand public health system, work has been taking place to use electronic systems to convey data from the 'floor to the board' that makes patient needs, and therefore nursing work, visible. For nurses, these developments in health information technology puts us in a very new and exciting position of being able to articulate the work of nursing through a language understood at all levels of an organisation, the language of acuity. Nurses increasingly have a considerable stake-hold in patient acuity data. Patient acuity systems, when used well, can assist greatly in demonstrating how much work is required, the type of work, and when it will be required. The New Zealand Safe Staffing Unit is supporting New Zealand nurses to create a culture of shared governance, where nursing data is informing policies, staffing methodologies and forecasting within their organisations. Assisting organisations to understand their acuity data, strengthening user confidence in using electronic patient acuity systems, and ensuring nursing and midwifery workload is accurately reflected is critical to the success of the safe staffing programme. Nurses and midwives have the capacity via an acuity tool to become key informers of organisational planning. Quality patient care, best use of health resources and a quality work environment are essential components of a safe, resilient and well resourced organisation. Nurses are the key informers of this information. In New Zealand a national level approach is paving the way for significant changes to the understanding and use of patient acuity and nursing workload information.

Keywords : nursing workload, patient acuity, safe staffing, New Zealand

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