

Title: Measuring the impact of COVID-19 related change on Australian nursing practice and nurse well-being

Suzanne Sheppard-Law, Deborah Debono, Anna Doab, Margaret Fry

In February 2020 nurses experienced an unprecedented concurrent introduction of social behavioral controls, rapid changes to health-care and ways of working. To date, the impact of COVID-19 on the practice and well-being of nurses in Australia has not been described.

The aim of this study is to provide insights into the impact of this pandemic on nursing practice and nurse well-being.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was circulated via social-media platforms between May and September 2020. Nurses working in a health care settings were invited to participate. The self-administered on-line questionnaire collected data on: demographic/workforce; exposure to COVID-19; knowledge; perception/fear of COVID-19 and wellbeing (generalised anxiety score  $\geq 3$ ). Data were collected via a Redcap digital platform and exported into SPSS for analysis.

Results: A vast number of COVID-19 related changes were reported at a health service and individual practice level by 100% (n=225) and 49% (n=86/175) of participating nurses respectively. During the study period, nurses reported having access to current COVID-related information (n=129/158, 84%), personal protection equipment training (n=153/158, 96%) and felt confident in their knowledge to prevent transmission (n= 153/158, 96%). COVID-19 related fears of infection, transmission to significant others and avoidance were reported. Of the nurses who responded (n= 159), 80% reported generalised anxiety. Nurses who reported that changes to nursing practice impaired their ability to complete a patient safety assessment (OR 3, p=0.019, 95%CI: 1.2-7.7) or were unable to communicate with their patient (OR 2.6, p=0.012, 95%CI: 1.2-5.4) reported higher generalized anxiety scores. Conversely, nurses who accepted the risk of caring for a COVID-19 infected patient were 0.35 times less likely (p=0.25, 95%CI: 0.14-0.9) to experience generalized anxiety.

Conclusion: Our study reports the impact of COVID-19 related change. Findings inform nurse leaders as to which practice changes and scenarios compromise nurse well-being; and where targeted supportive strategies may need to be implemented.