

Association between healthcare providers' workload on patient outcomes: a systematic review

Tennessee State University - Nashville, TN

Abstract

Background and purpose: The purpose of this review was to assess the effects of healthcare provider workload on patient outcomes.

Methods: PubMed Central, NCBI, and Google Scholar with the key words physician workload, nurse workload, physical therapist workload, patient outcomes, and burnout were used for the literature review. The CEBM critical appraisal tool was used to determine level of evidence, and only articles with level 1-5 evidence were included. The inclusion criteria included studies written in English, full text articles, articles published in the last 25 years, peer-reviewed articles, and studies on physician/nurse/physical therapist workload impact on patient outcomes.

Results: Thirty-two research articles met the inclusion criteria. Patient outcomes of physicians, nurses, and physical therapists tended to decrease with excessive workload.

Clinical Relevance: Excessive workload of physicians, nurses, and physical therapists, can lead to decreased safety and outcomes of patients.

Conclusion: Patients are at an increased risk of injury and decreased health outcomes following treatment from healthcare professionals that are overworked. This elevated risk of injury and reduced patient outcomes should be considered when determining the optimal number of patients for healthcare providers. Future research is needed to determine optimal patient workload for physicians, nurses, and physical therapists to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the health care provider and patient.