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Health care providers' spirit at work within a restructured workplace

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Background: The recent world-wide financial crisis led to a focus on professional practice changes and healthcare restructuring. These changes motivated by the need to optimize resources had the potential to dehumanize health care. Spirit at work (SAW), identified as a holistic measure of workplace outcomes, has emerged as a response to Canadian nurse determination to maintain a healthy and productive healthcare work environment.

Aim: The aim of this research was to describe the care provider's perceptions of SAW within the restructured continuing care workplace.

Method: Explanatory mixed methods research using concurrent triangulation was conducted. 18 Likert style questions were further informed by two open-ended questions. The survey was provided to a convenience sample of 53 care providers within a continuing care centre during February, 2014. 31 care providers, comprised of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and unlicensed continuing care aides responded to the survey. The survey results were compared with previous research conducted with licensed care providers.

Results: This mixed group of licensed and unlicensed care providers reported perceptions of SAW that were lower than those reported by licensed care providers in previous studies. They also described a low sense of community and low mystical experience. Responses to open ended questions provided suggestions for improvements which included; improving manager/care provider interactions, listening to provider concerns, supporting teamwork, creating a non-punitive workplace and providing adequate resources for patient care.

Conclusions: The high proportion of unlicensed continuing care aides in this sample may have contributed to low SAW. Further research identifying the relationship between care provider perceptions of SAW and measureable patient morbidity statistics is essential. SAW research investigating workplace perceptions of licensed and unlicensed health care providers offers valuable decision making information for policy makers and health care leaders.

Biography

Joan I J Wagner completed her Ph.D. from the University of Alberta. She is the acting Dean of Graduate Programs and Coordinator of Research and Scholarship for the Faculty of Nursing, University of Regina. In addition, she is a Research Associate with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. She has published more than 13 papers in reputed journals.

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