ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Changes Experienced by Nursing Professionals Double Workday

Alterações Vivenciadas por Profissionais de Enfermagem que Apresentam Duas Jornadas de Trabalho

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To identify changes experienced by nursing professionals who exhibit double workday. Method: Descriptive, exploratory study of qualitative approach, carried out in a private educational institution of higher level of the central region of Rio Grande do Sul, in the period of August to October 2011. The subjects were: nurses teachers, nursing technicians and nursing scholars. The data was produced from a form containing mixed questions, after the approval of a research project by the Ethics Committee in Research, Protocol 186.2011.2. Results: Three categories have been identified: double workday in Nursing: a tiresome, necessary and rewarding routine; Night work: changing the routine of nurses workers life and double working day/night job predisposing sensations of pain in nursing workers. Conclusion: Despite the study participants recognizing the changes caused in the personal and professional daily routine, they keep it seeking for a better future. Descriptors: Jornada de trabalho; Trabalho Noturno; Enfermagem.

RESUMO

Objetivo: identificar alterações vivenciadas por profissionais de enfermagem que apresentam dupla jornada de trabalho. Método: estudo exploratório, descritivo, de abordagem qualitativa, realizado em uma instituição de ensino privado de nível superior da região central do Rio Grande do Sul, no período de agosto a outubro de 2011. Os sujeitos foram: enfermeiros docentes, técnicos de enfermagem e acadêmicos de enfermagem. Os dados foram produzidos a partir de um formulário contendo questões mistas após a aprovação do projeto de pesquisa pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, Protocolo n° 186.2011.2. Resultados: três categorias foram identificadas: Dupla jornada de trabalho na enfermagem; uma rotina cansativa, necessária e recompensadora; Trabalho noturno: alterando a rotina de vida dos trabalhadores de enfermagem e Dupla jornada de trabalho/noturno predispondo sensações de dor nos trabalhadores de enfermagem. Conclusão: os participantes do estudo, mesmo reconhecendo as alterações causadas no cotidiano pessoal e profissional, mantém essa rotina em busca de terem um futuro melhor. Descriptors: Jornada de trabalho; Trabalho Noturno; Enfermagem.

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INTRODUCTION

Work overload, family activities, distance to go to work, transport schedules, transit, remuneration and relationships end up influencing worker’s healthy live, as well as his development in user’s assistance. Considering these changes, there are still professions requiring an overload of work, such as in the health area, especially nursing, which presents a significant workload and may lead to psychic and physiological changes.

The Health Education Authority classifies Nursing as the fourth most stressful professions in the public sector, trying to have professionally social recognition. It also states that the nurse is under a constant state of stress due to the type of work he practices, the environmental conditions of work, the lack of quality and technical and human resources in many sectors, as well as overload activities.¹

Nursing professionals aiming to supplement income, have increased workload through double shift work.² This fact make them often to have an overnight work shift. This change of the work shift (day-night), affects the sleep-wake cycle, wearing the worker, which can affect their efficiency, physical and psychological health, their well-being, live together with family and social life.³

The symptoms changing human behavior can be characterized by physical and mental changes. The physical change, also called nociceptive or corporal, are characterized by the expression of tissue injury caused by injuries, lesions by microorganisms or by tissue illness whose cause is not clear. In psychic or emotional change, there is no presence of tissue injury, but the individual presents physiological changes due to nervous system.⁴

Nursing professionals are sometimes exposed to unhealthy work environments, with high rate of illness, both in public and private health network, facing an exhausting workday combined with an environment full of tensions and borderline situations. A study with nurses from the surgical area revealed that most of them have low salaries, long periods of work in a unit, double shift, little free time for leisure, among others.⁵ Thus, it is observed the relevance of studying the health of these workers, considering that they are constantly experiencing the suffering and work overload, making it more susceptible to physical/mental changes. Some nursing professionals work in both institutions, having an overload of work, physical and psychological wear.⁶ In addition to professional activities, they have family and personal commitments needed to any human being.

It is important that workers, especially nursing professionals can feel satisfied and accomplished with activities that develop in the workplace, because often they take care for vulnerable people by disease and end up getting involved in the work area, forgetting his own care. In addition, it is essential to produce knowledge, due to the reality experienced by nursing workers.

The development of this study is relevant especially to nursing professionals who exhibit double workday, for being able to bring results that help the understanding of the importance and physiologic and emotional dimension that can change their life trajectory, corroborating to improve the quality of relations, experiences in the family atmosphere and professional workers.

Based on the above, there is the following question: what are the changes experienced by nursing professionals who exhibit double workday? The objective of this study was to identify changes experienced by nursing professionals who exhibit double workday in an attempt to respond this question explained and in anticipation of possible interactive points of view and committed to the health of nursing professionals.

METHOD

Exploratory, descriptive study of qualitative approach, since it aims to provide an overview of a particular situation and may be regarded as the first step of a broader search, since its results can organize strategic plans of action, contributing to the changing reality investigated.⁷

The research was developed in a private educational institution of higher level, located in the central region of Rio Grande do Sul/RS, in the period of August to October 2011. As inclusion criteria there were established: be nursing professional, possess a double shift nursing work (night work, and day or night job and academic), and be in this situation for more than six months. Exclusion criteria were: professionals who were on vacation or with medical certificate from the period of data collection, professionals who do not have double workday or having less than six months.

Five nursing technicians with activities on the night shift and attending graduation in the day shift, five nursing academic scholars on the night shift and four nurses teachers of the nursing course having double shift work, were the sample of this research, totaling 14 subjects.
The data were produced with a semi-structured form containing mixed questions and analyzed/categorized following the analysis of content of Bardin,8 from a pre-analysis (organizing the material collected and systematizing the ideas through meticulous reading of responses obtained in the interview) and then the categorization of registry, which resulted in three categories.

Ethical and legal precepts involving research with human beings were considered, as resolution 196/96 of the Ministry of Health.9 Thus, it was previously distributed the term of Consent free and clear for the participants of the survey, with two copies, one for the participant and another one for the researcher. The anonymity of the subjects was kept and they were identified by: EHN (educational and healthcare nurse), AT (academics being nursing technicians) and AS (academic scholarship assistance), followed by a number corresponding to the order of the interview (EHN1, EHN2…; AT1, AT2…; AS1, AS2, Etc.).

The research project has obtained approval of the Ethics Committee in Research of the Franciscano university center UNIFRA - under paragraph 186.2011.2.

RESULTS

Of the 14 respondents, five were male and nine female. The age ranged between 20 to 49 years old. Most people interviewed had the double workday time equal to the time of night work, except for scholars academics who have a shorter double workday and night work, for having initiated this activity at the academy. The time they have double workday and night work, ranged from six months to 21 years.

When asked about physical activity, nine of them stated that they had not any kind of physical activity as a result of overload of activities, physical fatigue, pain, sleep and lack of time; five reported that even with the short time, fatigue and sleep, they practice regularly weekly physical activity (gym, hiking, pilates). In questioning the subjects about the double workday, they claimed be tiring and stressful, but necessary and rewarding.

Double workday in Nursing: a tiresome, necessary and rewarding routine

It is necessary, because they need to work support the family, university, acquire more knowledge and experience, while remaining in activity. In addition to the need to maintain the double shift, they claim it is rewarding because they like what they do and are recognized as the following lines show.

[...] Sometimes it becomes tiresome, but it is very rewarding. (EHN 1)
[...] It is part of the routine of life. In spite of tiring in [...] a few moments. (EHN 2)
[...] Tiring, but rewarding. (EHN 3)
I like it because it keeps me active and producing [...] (AS 1)
[...] Now the routine is rewarding, but at the beginning it took me ages to get used to it. (AS 2)

For the respondents this double workday is important even though being stressful.

♦ Night work: changing the routine of nursing workers life

When asked about the changes of routine life, after the beginning of night work, the subject stated that they had some type of change. One of the most frequent changes generated by the night work are: the accumulated sleep, fatigue, dispersion, forgetfulness, depression, increased appetite, and weight gain, accumulation of activities, without daily routines, decrease in leisure time and insomnia, and only one of the respondents stated does not submit any change in his routine of life, as the following lines:

[...] With the night's work and poor diet I got hyperinsulinism. (AT 1)
[...] I appreciate more family moments. (EHN 1)
[...] Fatigue, dispersion, oblivion and depression. (EHN 2)
[...] Yes, I started to sleep during the day and had weight gain. (AT 1)
[...] Yes, I have trouble sleeping and stress. (AT3)

The night work changes the routine activities, thus most of the respondents reported that the night work changed their life routine. The sleep delay is one of the major consequences, as well as changes in eating habits, eating unnecessary things in the wrong times and consequently showing the increase in weight.

♦ Double working day/night job predisposing sensations of pain in nursing workers.

On the working day/night job, most of the respondents said they feel some kind of pain, such as headache, neck pain, lumbar, lower limbs, muscle, stomach pain and mood changes also highlighting the irritability and metabolic diseases as hyperinsulinism, as can be seen in the lines:

[...] When I get too long awake, I feel my legs paining, head paining and this makes me very angry. (AS 1)
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 [...] I feel headache, muscle pain and gastritis. (AS 2)
 [...] I have pain in lower limbs and spine. (EHN 1)
 [...] I feel pain in the feet. (EHN 2)

As to the type of pain after starting the night job, more than half of those surveyed was unfamiliar in stating that they feel any change in the body and pain; they said feeling pain in the lower limbs, muscle pains, irritability and changes in metabolism, for spending hours standing, overload of activities and changes in eating habits.

To ask how to deal with the pain, some respondents said that they use some medication as painkillers and muscle relaxant (self-medicating), others reported that they do not take any kind of medicine, but perform massage, scald feet, physiotherapy, and watch their diet. It should be noted that respondents who use self-medicating, do not have medical follow-up.

**DISCUSSION**

It is shown a considerable increase in the level of professional stress, mainly as a result of technological advances, innovation of the methodology of work and increasing the volume of tasks.10,11

The nursing professional plays several roles on direct assistance to the client, employee supervision, organization and administration of the unit. This overload of activities together with his working conditions, may cause physical and psychological wear.12

Nursing activities in the hospital environment are 24 hours a day, with that, these professionals are subjected to a high rate of health stressors, as well as changes in sleep, biological, physiological and psychic pattern, that just minimizing the social and family life.13 For this reason, nursing is one of the occupations with a high risk of tension and illness, which causes fatigue and anxiety. When there is an imbalance resulting from the relationship between work demands and affective skill worker occupational stress can occur. The psychological suffering of the worker can happen when he is unable to transform their work in order to get adequate to their physiological/mentally needs.14

In this study, there was the absence of the practice of physical activities by nursing workers. Reality that is justified by the lack of time and available as result of the double workday. However, they opt for double shift by the need to keep the studies, their home and basic needs, have a better quality of life from the studies. As result of having more than one job or working and studying, many of the respondents work at night, having changes in daily routines, in metabolism, decreasing concentration, delay sleep, among others.

To play and organize their professional and personal tasks is not easy, since physical activity becomes something indispensable in the life of any human being, as well as leisure-time activities and other programs that can help in performance and reduction of physical and psychological wear.15 Another situation that deserves attention is the amount of hours they sleep. To keep a good mood is important to sleep eight hours daily, being the night the best time, but there is less sleep when there is a double workday, so sleep is in delay.

It is clear that the sleep in delay hinders concentration, can increase muscle tension, contribute to the emergence of gastritis and pain in general.12 So, it is evidenced that the double workday favors illness, and the night work is the main cause for greater concern, because the human body is adapted to work during the day and rest and replenishment of energy during the night.16

The accumulation of activities in nursing work, plus lack of time due to double shift often leads the professional an inadequate food supply causing changes in metabolism. It is evidenced in the data that there is presence of depression, weight gain, hyperinsulinism, pain, forgetfulness, sleep in delay, exhaustion, accumulation of activities, insomnia in nursing professionals.

The night job has consequences on the well-being, returning in sleep, and particularly on fatigue. Sleep restriction causes reduction of motor and cognitive performance, changes of metabolic, hormonal and immunological activities. It is noted a decrease in performance in certain periods of the day or night, this can lead to accidents and errors in the user care.17

Some threatening factors to nursing professionals health are due to the reduced number of professionals and the overload of activities, issues related to low wages, which contributes to having more than one working link, resulting in long and exhausting hours. The working environment, interpersonal unsatisfactory relationship, overload, night work and longer work contribute to stress, which some nursing professionals have.18

Occupational stress is a change resulting from the relationship between worker and professional environment in which requires a demand of work that surpasses the abilities of the individual to overcome them, and this leads him to feel negative physical or mental reactions.18 Even feeling tired/fatigued,
health professionals often do not take care about their health, i.e. beyond the workload they still use self-medication in order to meet their physiological needs, common in any human being.

It should be noted that these nurses must learn to value self-care so that they can decrease the aggravations in the occupation. The work in health requires thinking in the care of who cares, because when the worker feels satisfied, recognized, pleased, reflecting positively on the activities they carry out. The work is very meaningful in people's lives, giving identity to them and can characterize as a source of pleasure and well-being, as well as health problems. With all this, we can see in the interviews how these professionals need to rethink their work and family life, to live with quality in the future.

**CONCLUSION**

It was evidenced that study participants presented changes in physiological and psychological in personal and professional routine by a double workday. Even though aware of the consequences of the double journey they continue to do it, by financial necessity seeking a better future. Although this reality bring negatives things there is also the positives mentioned by study subjects, knowledge, experience, professional and personal achievement.

This study contributed to the training of nursing professionals during the school to discuss and rethink doing in nursing, both in assisting and teaching. In addition, the reflection and contextualization of the nursing role in health promotion, in addition to the user, i.e., self-care of the professional, because who is not well cannot take care of each other.

The result of this study can subsidize the formulation of new public policies in the context of the health of workers in nursing, as well as provide a reorganization, bringing other possibilities of care, in addition to direct and qualify in health/nursing care. To represent an individual and social problem that brings implications and challenges to live nursing workers with double workday, meeting the day-to-day work is critical, as it may assist in reducing the disease by overload of activities, enabling a higher quality of life and as consequence, the appreciation of their care to better assist users.

However, it is necessary to perform more studies to this subject to contribute to the quality of life and appreciation of these workers, once the nursing professionals are the ones who remain most of the time in direct care to users. Therefore, it must be valued and discussed in the scenarios where these professionals their labor so that from their live healthy, the can perform a quality care.

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