

# Care also for nurses in their healthcare organizations

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), by 2030 healthcare organizations will face a shortage of approximately 10 million professionals, of whom a significant portion will be nurses. In low- and middle-income countries, this shortage will be nearly 50% of the global need. In developed nations, the ageing workforce and the increased healthcare demands will influence this nursing shortage<sup>1</sup>. In Italy, about 148,000 nurses lack, with over 30,000 required for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and the implementation of community-care hospitals. Besides, by the end of 2026, approximately 35,000 nurses will retire, further straining the healthcare system. This shortage will increase the pressure on the remaining nursing workforce, exposing them to burnout and intention to leave the profession. In this condition, healthcare organizations should identify strategies for improving nurses' working conditions and facing the citizens' healthcare needs<sup>2</sup>.

For these reasons, the promotion and improvement of nursing organizational well-being have been evaluated in several research. This theoretical framework overcomes the absence of conflict or job dissatisfaction, focusing instead on creating a positive, stimulating work environment oriented toward continuous improvement<sup>3</sup>. A positive work environment directly impacts professionals' quality of life and, consequently, clinical outcomes. A healthcare organization that improves the physical, mental, social, and professional well-being of its employees can be considered a dynamic system operating effectively, efficiently, and equitably to achieve its core goals: delivering high-quality patient care and ensuring a balanced work-private life<sup>4</sup>.

A healthcare organization promoting nurses' well-being should have at least eight essential elements:

### 1. Adopting a Positive Organizational Culture and Work Climate

A positive work climate is characterized by mutual trust, safety and support for nurses. When team members trust one another, collaboration becomes more effective, improving clinical outcomes by facilitating open communication—essential for patient management and the timely identification of errors or risks. Professionals in a positive work climate also feel respected, valued, motivated, and satisfied, reducing absenteeism, stress, burnout, and turnover. A cohesive, motivated team provides high-quality care, reducing errors, enhancing patient safety, and promptly addressing clinical challenges<sup>5</sup>.

### 2. Effective Nursing Leadership

A nursing leader who inspires, supports, and empowers his/her nurses influences the quality of care. Engaging and motivating staff toward shared goals is fundamental for a nursing leader. Effective leaders manage the nurses' organizational climate by modelling their behaviours and promoting an inclusive, participatory approach. Leaders supporting their group of nurses and promoting open communication improve their organizational well-being, reduce stress levels, and indirectly improve clinical outcomes. Conversely, inadequate leadership can generate interpersonal conflicts, increase burnout, and compromise patient care quality, such as increasing healthcare-associated infection rates<sup>6</sup>.

### 3. Organizational Support

Policies that promote work-life balance, continuous professional development, and stress management support nurses' physical and mental well-being. Organizations investing in these areas improved staff performance, enhanced patient safety, reduced medical errors, and higher user satisfaction. A direct correlation between organizational factors—such as workload, role clarity, and relational dynamics—and clinical outcomes has been registered in

several research. In contrast, environments characterized by excessive workloads, unclear roles, and lack of support lead to adverse outcomes, such as medication errors, emotional exhaustion, and interpersonal conflicts<sup>7</sup>.

#### **4. Optimal Resource Management**

Proper allocation of human, technological, and financial resources ensures organizational effectiveness and efficiency and prevents high workloads, job demands, and burnout risk. Healthcare organizations should ensure adequate material resources and maintain optimal nurse-to-patient ratios around the clock. The optimal resource allocation improves care quality, enhances system sustainability and protects nurses' health. Adequate nurse staffing reduces the risk of medical errors, hospital-acquired infections, pressure ulcers, and patient falls, leading to lower mortality and readmission rates<sup>8</sup>.

#### **5. Safety and Quality of Care**

A healthy organization implements rigorous measures to prevent clinical errors and fosters continuous improvement through data collection and outcome analysis. Patient safety and organisational well-being are connected, and both are priorities for healthcare organisations. A culture of safety increases in a positive organizational climate where nurses feel valued, supported, and engaged in decision-making processes. The more nurses are involved in their organizational dynamics, the more they perform better and, consequently, patients receive high caring quality<sup>9</sup>.

#### **6. Innovation and Adaptability**

Adapting and integrating technological and environmental changes is the key to enhancing efficient, appropriate and effective care. Improving these elements requires an organization where nursing well-being is prioritized because nurses are more motivated and committed. The COVID-19 pandemic testified how well-functioning organizations can face challenges by reorganizing services, managing infection risks, and ensuring service continuity under pressure, limiting the repercussions on their nurses<sup>10</sup>.

#### **7. Work-Family Balance**

The ambivalence between work and private life aspects generates in nurses a possible source of conflict due to professional characteristics, such as irregular shifts, overtime, and patient and organizational demands. In case of work-

family imbalance, nurses are more stressed, reduce their performance, are less satisfied and in conflict with their colleagues. Chronic work-family conflicts can lead to psychosomatic illnesses (e.g. diabetes, burnout or metabolic syndrome) and increase the absenteeism rate. Flexible organizational strategies, such as meeting professional requests, predictable scheduling of shifts and balanced workloads, can mitigate these challenges, enhancing nurses' physical and mental well-being and consequently, balancing their working and personal lives<sup>11</sup>.

#### **8. Emotional Engagement and Interpersonal Relationships**

Emotional engagement, or the capacity to invest positive emotions in one's work, is essential for organizational well-being. However, due to the nurse-patient relationship, excessive engagement can lead to negative consequences, such as compassion fatigue. An equipe of nurses that discuss without fighting, based on social, emotional and personal relationships, is a preventive strategy to manage negative repercussions on the group, individual nurses and patients. Healthcare managers, such as nursing managers or head nurses, should recognize and invest in this strategy. A cohesive, trust-based team perceived low workload levels and felt to belong to their organization, identifying with their goals and outcomes. Initiatives such as team-building activities and regular supervision can strengthen interpersonal relationships and reduce interpersonal conflicts<sup>12,13</sup>.

In conclusion, a positive organizational climate, effective leadership and management of organizational variables, and a balanced work-private life influence the nurses' well-being, creating sustainable working environments for professionals and patients. A healthy healthcare organization not only cares for patient's needs but also cares for its staff, ensuring continuous improvement and resilience to face challenges. Investing in nursing well-being is an ethical and competitive advantage for a healthcare organization, enhancing care quality and ensuring long-term well-being for all stakeholders.

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