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Registered nurses' handover practices in emergency care units

Kaufrinder, Anthony Pierre

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DECLARATION

I, Anthony Pierre Kaufrinder, declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Science in Nursing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

Signature: _____ 19th day of August, 2010.

DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my family and the incredible work done by all the heroic men and women within the paramedical and nursing professions who care for, preserve and save patients' lives as well as making a positive difference within the emergency nursing environment on a daily basis. Also to the nurses and nursing managers as well as hospital matrons who participated in the study, as without your valuable contribution and participation, this study would not have been possible. I thank you and may God bless you all.

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ABSTRACT

Handover is an internationally recognised formal procedure, which has become a ritual in daily nursing practice. A structured handover plays an important role in verbal as well as written interdisciplinary communication, decision making and patient treatment, thus ensuring patient safety and maintaining the continuity of care.

The purpose of this study was to determine and describe the handover practices as reported by registered nurses working in emergency care units in private sector hospitals. The objectives determined the information content in current handover practices of registered nurses, including the view or opinions of these nurses regarding handover practices. Furthermore, this study indicated were there are differences in handover practices between specialists versus non – specialist nurses.

A descriptive, prospective research design was used to collect data from registered nurses working in emergency care units at private sector hospitals (n = 8). All registered nurses (N = 142) who met the inclusion criteria, were invited to participate in the study. Registered nurses who returned completed questionnaires constituted the final sample (n = 117). Data on handover practices were collected by means of a 96 item (17 question / 5 page) self administered questionnaire. This data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Chi^2, Bartlett's test for equal variances, Spearman's test, Pearson's r, Fisher's exact, student T-Test and Cronbach's Alpha. The level of significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$. Epi-Info and STATA version 10 statistical computer packages were used for data analysis.

Results indicated that 10.26% of registered nurses working in emergency care units had received formal training regarding handover practices and procedures. In order

to solve lack of formal handover training problem, the researcher has established an acronym by using the word “HANDOVER”©, which may aid registered nurses with the handover practices and procedures. Thus, offering the handover structure and more user-friendly format. Use of a handover acronym pocket card was suggested for future formal training purposes.