Nursing Practice and Environmental Health

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Presenter Disclosures

Elizabeth Schenk, PhD, MHI, RN

(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose

Practice Workgroup

• Chair
  – Elizabeth Schenk, PhD, MHI, RN
• ANHE Support
  – Katie Huffling, MS, RN, CNM
• Shared Leadership
  – Healthcare Without Harm Nurses’ Working Group
    • Kelli Barber, MSN, RN
    • Mary Margaret Thomas, MSN, RN

Practice Issues

• Address EH in Nursing Practice
  – How do environmental issues impact health?
  – How does nursing practice impact the environment?

ANA Scope and Standards of Practice

Standard 16:
  The registered nurse practices in an environmentally safe and healthy manner.

Environmental Impacts ON Health

• Acute Care
  – Asthma, heat related illness, allergies, skin disorders, cancer
• Reproductive Health
  – Infertility, neonatal health impacts
• Community Health
  – Air and water quality, fires, flooding
• Home Health
  – Home exposures, radon, chemicals
Environmental Impacts of Healthcare and Nursing Practice

- Acute Care
- Community Health
- Home Health
- Education

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Guides for Practice

Energy Use in Healthcare

BACKGROUND
- According to the DOE, inpatient healthcare ranks as the second largest commercial energy user after the food service industry.
- Hospital energy use intensity of office buildings.
- The U.S. uses 40 percent of our energy needs through heating, cooling, and lighting.
- It is estimated that in the U.S. we waste more than half of our energy.
- Occupancy levels significantly impact energy use.

HOW IS ENERGY USE RELATED TO HEALTH?
- Energy use in healthcare is associated with climate change.
- Indoor air quality impacts health and well-being.
- Energy use in healthcare contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.

What Nurses Can Do to Reduce Energy Use

- Work with green teams to address conservation measures.
- When making purchasing decisions about nursing equipment, include energy efficiency as a purchasing criterion.
- Establish occupancy behaviors in work spaces: turn off lights and monitors when not in use, unplug electric devices between uses, have a plan for shutting down energy needs of unoccupied rooms (turn off lights, turn down thermostats, open blinds in winter, close blinds in summer).
- Establish quiet time during afternoon and turn lights down.
- Ensure lights are down at night, both for energy savings and better patient rest.
- Encourage work site to establish computer power management plan to conserve energy use of electronics when not in use.
- Encourage work site to install occupancy sensors for lighting when possible.
- Establish processes to unplug rechargeable devices when fully charged.
- Join your organization's commuter club, reduce the number of single occupancy vehicle trips taken to get to work.
WASTE STREAMS IN HEALTH CARE

- Reduce disposable products, avoid overuse or mistreatment of healthcare products, divert more waste to recycling streams.
- Recycle all you can. Sort waste effectively. Encourage your practice setting to provide containers and processes for recycling. Look for opportunities to compost waste your workplace can recycle.
- Encourage your practice setting to compost. Sort waste effectively.
- Sort waste effectively. All sharps, body tissues, cultures, infectious items, blood are infectious waste. Lightly soaked bloody bandages are non-infectious waste. Arrange it properly to drop or throw at a shared source.

RECYCLING IN HEALTHCARE

- Card & Envelopes are part of paper. Take back and find a location to recycle.
- Learn what is available in your community. Help establish collection pathways.
- Discard used batteries and equipment in battery recycling programs. Care of the environment.

TOXIC CHEMICALS IN HEALTH CARE

- Push organizations to use safer alternatives to DCM. Find substitutes, especially in health care, and there are safe alternatives to DCM. Learn about what is in the products you purchase for your home and car.
- Encourage organizations to use bio-based alternatives to hazardous chemicals necessary for infection control. Ensure adequate ventilation.
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How to protect staff and other

- Reduce and eliminate allergens. Encourage the enforcement of your organization’s policy to be fragrance-free for your health and that of your patients. Avoid VOCs in the products you personally use.
Sustainable Food Systems

- Healthier foods
- More local Foods
- Reduced Meat consumption
- Healthier beverages
- Farmer’s Markets
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Gardens on Hospital Grounds

Engagement

- Nurse Involvement in efforts/projects
- Nursing leadership
- Nursing education
- Patient and community education
- Advocacy and policy
- Behavior change

Practice Workgroup

- Successes
  - EnviRN Content
  - 2012 Practice Webinar Series
  - Nurse Champions
  - Practically Green

Practice Workgroup

- Current Focus
  - Standard 16
  - Magnet
  - Climate Impacts
Practice Workgroup

• Getting Involved
  – Monthly call-in meetings
  – Second Tuesday 11 am Eastern
  – Tell us your story: blog, presentation on monthly call

Thank you

• Contact
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