Clinical errors, nursing shortage and moral distress: The situation in Jordan

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Abstract

In the current healthcare arena, clinical errors are receiving much attention. Unintentionally, nurses commit errors, which require guiding ethical principles. This replicated study aimed to assess Jordanian Registered Nurses’ (RNs) perceptions of clinical errors they had committed over the past year; assess nurses' perceptions of clinical errors committed by other nurses’ detect if these errors were related to the nursing shortage and assess whether or not nurses felt any moral distress. The studied phenomena were compared across different hospitals as well as in various units and wards. A survey was used to collect data from 420 nurses from 13 hospitals. A considerable percentage of RNs reported that they omitted to give medication/treatment or gave medication/treatment at the wrong time, and also indicated that other nurses gave incorrect medication or incorrectly administered treatments; practice issues which were related to the nursing shortage and causing moral distress. RNs perceived that clinical errors/untoward clinical incidents that they and other nurses experienced occurred largely because of the nursing shortage and resulted in moral distress. Moreover, a considerable percentage of RNs perceived that other nurses made clinical errors and/or experienced untoward clinical incidents related to the nursing shortage more frequently than the RNs themselves. Across different types of hospitals, nurses were not different in regard to clinical errors and their treatments, and the resultant moral distress. Nurses in units were slightly higher than nurses in wards in reporting clinical errors, treating them when they occurred, relating these errors to the nursing shortage, and thus were experiencing more moral distress. Aggravated by the nursing shortage, moral distress that occurs as a result of clinical errors is increasing, thus nurse managers should assess the contributing factors of moral distress and find ways to eliminate them.