



Abstract Title: Above and beyond: The work of staff in long-term care

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Introduction

As the Canadian population ages, there is increasing awareness of the need to improve and expand services to support older adults, including those in long-term care. Registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and continuing care assistants provide essential services in long-term care facilities across Canada. Other studies have found high levels of staff turnover in long-term care settings which may compromise the quality of care for residents. This may be due to job-related stress and burnout which are commonly reported in studies of long-term care. To recruit and retain long-term care staff, it is important to explore what motivates staff to work in long-term care. A more thorough understanding of the positive experiences of long-term staff may help dispel the negative rhetoric that often surrounds long-term care and attract more human health resources to this setting.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to describe the experiences of registered nurses, licenced practical nurses and continuing care assistants working in long-term care facilities.

Methods

This study used qualitative data collected from a larger mixed-methods study, Care by Design. A full description of the larger study has been published elsewhere. The qualitative phase of the study explored the lived experience of long-term care staff from the perspectives of key stakeholders including administrators, registered nurses,

licensed practical nurses, continuing care assistants, residents, family members and extended care paramedics via focus groups and individual interviews.

Results

Data analysis revealed themes consistent with other findings in the literature including teams, scope of practice, staff shortages, and residents' home, as well as a newly emerging theme of staff going "above and beyond" their clinical duties to care for residents. This above and beyond theme was categorized into subthemes including: 1. long-term care facility family; 2. time with residents; 3. comfort and support for families; and 4. end-of-life care. The findings show that staff develop a kinship with residents and demonstrate respect and kindness towards residents' families. At the end-of-life, staff are dedicated to working as a team to ensure residents are comfortable and never alone.

Conclusions

These findings demonstrate the positive aspects of working in long-term care and feature a newly emerging theme of long-term staff going above and beyond their call of duty to care for residents. In emphasizing these themes of positive and fulfilling work, the present study provides insight into what motivates staff to work in long-term care, which may in turn inform recruitment and retention strategies.

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Cite this document in APA:

Power, M., Gard Marshall, E., Edgecombe, N. & Andrew, M. Collaborative Health Conference on Research, Practice and Community Innovations Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS. Retrieved from <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/HLHL/>

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