A pilot study to compare some effects on health and safety in full time nursing staff that choose to work 8-hour or 12-hour shift patterns

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ABSTRACT

Background: Shift work has been shown to be an unhealthy method of working, but is unlikely to disappear.

Aims: This study seeks to determine differences in personal satisfaction with work sickness absence incident reporting between two types of shift pattern commonly worked.

Methods: Nursing staff of any grade were recruited from areas of St. George’s Hospital where the two types of shift pattern were concomitantly worked and where choice existed over type of shift pattern worked. Nurses were given the ASSET questionnaire, which is a tool for determining job satisfaction. Additionally, sickness absence data and incident reports were obtained from recruits with individual consent. A comparison was made between these outcomes for the two shift patterns.

Results: The two groups of nurses were well matched; however, younger nurses showed a preference for working long days (p=0.04) whereas conventional shift nurses tended to have worked for longer in their particular shift pattern (p=0.003).

Linear regression demonstrated that these differences did not confound comparisons testing the null hypotheses.

The null hypotheses were all demonstrated to be true apart from the finding that senior staff nurses working conventional shift patterns demonstrated job dissatisfaction in comparison with their long day counterparts (p=0.01).

There were variances in the types of incident reported between the two shift patterns, although this was likely to have been due to random variation in a small sample population.

Conclusions: It is possible that nurses entering employment in long day shifts switch to conventional shift patterns.
Senior staff nurses in conventional shift patterns demonstrate dissatisfaction with their work and this may lead to work related stress. The reasons for this need to be clarified.

Further research may identify reasons behind choice of shift pattern and methods of shift working that are less unhealthy.