U.S. Hospital Employment of Foreign-Educated Nurses and Patient Experience: A Cross-Sectional Study

Hayley D.GermackPhD, BSN, RN(Postdoctoral Fellow)Linda H.AikenPhD, RN, FAAN(The Claire M. Fagin Leadership Professor of Nursing)

Abstract

Introduction

For over half a century, hospitals in the United States have actively recruited foreign-educated nurses (FENs) in response to nurse shortages in hospitals and nursing homes. Little attention has been paid to the quality of care in the United States related to employment of FENs.

Aims

The purpose of this retrospective study was to determine whether employment of FENs in U.S. hospitals is associated with patient care experience.

Method

This study used cross-sectional data from three sources in 425 hospitals in four large states to evaluate the relationship between patient perceptions of care and hospital employment of FENs. The study linked data from publicly reported patient experience of care surveys, nurse surveys, and administrative data using unique hospital identifiers common across the data sets.

Results

Patient-reported care experience was found to be more negative in hospitals employing more FENs, after controls for other possible explanations. Each 10% increase in FENs was associated with a decrease in the percentage of patients who would recommend their hospital and a decrease in the percentage of patients giving favorable reports on five nursing-specific aspects of patient experience.
Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that employment of substantial numbers of nurses educated outside the United States may have implications for quality of care. The findings suggest that research on the outcomes of transition programs for FENs would be useful to inform regulatory policies.

Keywords

Foreign-educated nurses hospital staffing patient care experience patient satisfaction