

Healthy workplace, healthy you

Improving patient outcomes by improving staff health and wellbeing

In October 2015 the RCN launched the *Healthy Workplace, Healthy You* campaign. The campaign is targeted at both organisations and individual nursing staff and will be of interest to directors of nursing who want to improve the health and wellbeing of the workforce and, subsequently, patient outcomes.

Healthy Workplace

This element of the campaign supports health and social care employers and RCN workplace representatives to create and maintain good working environments with high-quality employment practices.

The RCN defines healthy workplaces as those which offer fair pay and rewards and have high-quality employment practices and procedures which promote a good work-life balance. A healthy workplace must promote dignity at work; protect and promote employees' health and safety; design jobs which provide employees with a degree of autonomy; and provide equitable access to training, learning and development opportunities.

Healthy You

Just as organisations need to create healthy workplaces for nursing staff, it is important that nursing staff also consider factors that impact upon their own health, known as self-care.

The Healthy You element of the campaign aims to support nursing staff to take ownership of their own health – whether that is physical or mental – and to take the time to apply the same level of care to their own wellbeing that they would to their patients. These elements focus on body, mind, heart, work, career, spirit and balance.

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Why is this campaign of interest to directors of nursing?

Set against a backdrop of low morale, high levels of work-related stress and intentions to leave the profession, the campaign aims to improve working conditions for nursing staff whether they work in the independent sector or NHS. Working in tandem with the healthy workplace campaign, the healthy you element aims to embed a culture of 'self-care' within nursing so that individuals can sustain their health and wellbeing, and consequently provide excellent patient care.

Interest in health and wellbeing has grown significantly in recent years and there is a growing body of evidence linking working conditions, management support and staff engagement with patient outcomes. The *Boorman Review* (NHS Health and Wellbeing, 2009) investigating health and wellbeing in the NHS demonstrated the relationship between staff health and well-being and key dimensions of service quality, including patient safety, patient experience and the effectiveness of patient care. Furthermore, work led by Aiken (2012) in the RN4CAST study reported that improvements in hospital working environments may be a cost-effective means of improving safety and quality in hospital care. A recent report commissioned by NHS Employers (Dawson, 2014) concluded that there is now a substantial amount of evidence that the experiences of staff are associated with the care, including safe care, provided to patients.

A major study by the National Nursing Research Unit (NNRU) at King's College London (Maben, 2012) demonstrated a link between hospital-based staff who had autonomy in their jobs and worked in a supportive environment and patient satisfaction with the care they received. Where patients rated care as 'bad', staff also felt their wellbeing was poor, with high job demand and burnout risks. But where patients rated their care as 'good', staff felt much more supported, in a good team and with high job satisfaction.

Not only is staff health and wellbeing important in its own right and an antecedent of patient care performance, but healthy working environments can improve the quality of organisational performance through the recruitment and retention of staff, a reduction in sickness absence costs and subsequent agency spend.

For more information on the case for healthy workplaces visit www.rcn.org.uk/healthyworkplace

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What are we asking directors of nursing to do?

- Visit the RCN's *Healthy Workplace, Healthy You* microsite to find out more, including further details on the evidence base and case for healthy workplaces, a healthy workplace toolkit and resources to promote self-care.
www.rcn.org.uk/healthyworkplace
- Speak to your local RCN contact to find out more about working with the RCN locally to improve the working environment and promote self-care.
- Put the campaign on the agenda of a Board meeting or meetings with senior nurse managers.
- Sign up to the campaign by making a pledge to improve working policies and practices.

References

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Published January 2016

Publication code 005 450

