



AMERICAN NEPHROLOGY NURSES' ASSOCIATION

ANNA'S 46TH NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

APRIL 19-22, 2015

DISNEY'S CORONADO SPRINGS RESORT, LAKE BUENA VISTA, FLORIDA

Nurse Manager Descriptions of their Outpatient Hemodialysis Practice Environments

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Aim: There is growing evidence that professional practice environments enable safe care processes for staff nurses and foster quality outcomes. However, little is known of the characteristics of the professional practice environment that facilitates or impedes the role of the nurse manager in outpatient hemodialysis units. The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the domains and characteristics of the practice environment in outpatient hemodialysis units that facilitate or impede the role of nurse managers in these settings.

Methods: A descriptive qualitative design was used. Seventeen nurse managers in outpatient hemodialysis units in the United States comprised the study sample. Telephone interviews were conducted, and a content analysis of secondary qualitative data from a primary study was used to encode the data.

Results: Nurse managers' descriptions of the hemodialysis practice environment that support the effectiveness of their administrative roles were consistent with the theorized domains of a professional nursing practice environment including 1) nurse manager participation in dialysis organization matters; 2) dialysis organization foundations for quality nurse manager leadership; 3) nurse manager ability, leadership, and support of staff; 4) resource adequacy; 5) nurse manager-unit staff relationships; and 6) nurse manager-medical director relationships. However, a majority of participants revealed an absence or limited presence of important characteristics within these domains that impede their role effectiveness, such as participation in policy development, nurse manager training, and adequate staffing resources.

Conclusion: These findings suggest a need to create and maintain a practice environment that supports dialysis nurse managers. More research is needed to quantify nurse manager practice environment characteristics and to determine the relationships between nurse manager practice environments and staff and patient outcomes in outpatient hemodialysis units.

Abstract selected for presentation at ANNA's 46th National Symposium, Lake Buena Vista, FL, 2015