



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to look at nurses' perceptions of noise properties, origins, and moments of most intensity in four hospitals in Spain.

Nurses' Perception of Noise Levels in Hospitals in Spain

Del Pilar Marques Sanchez, M., Calle Pardo, A. P., Calvo Sanchez, D., Nunez Gelado, Y. & Mompert Garcia, M. P. 2008 | *Journal of Nursing Administration Volume 38, Issue 5, Pages 220-222*

Key Concepts/Context

Even though we know that noise has an impact on patients, how noise impacts the work environment of nurses is not well understood. In general, relevant studies show that the worse types of noise for patients are background noise, vibrations, screen alarms, and other people talking. Nurse researchers in Spain recently completed the first phase of a multiphase study to identify the most annoying noises in the practice environment.

Methods

Sample

A total of 137 nurses responded to the questionnaire.

Setting

A questionnaire was designed to collect perceptions of nurses from four hospitals (Bierzo Hospital, Leon Hospital, University of Salamanca Hospital and Clinics, and University of the Princess Hospital) with three distinct patient populations (intensive care, surgical, and pediatric units).

Metrics and Measurement

Perception questionnaire was conducted.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were completed on the data.



The Center for Health Design:
Moving Healthcare Forward

The Center for Health Design advances best practices and empowers healthcare leaders with quality research that demonstrates the value of design to improve health outcomes, patient experience of care, and provider/staff satisfaction and performance.

Learn more at
www.healthdesign.org

Findings

The data show that noise is most disturbing for nurses when they are confronting stressful situations or, at a personal level, when they want to rest.

The types of noises in the professional environment that are most annoying are those that are repetitive, independently of intensity or duration. Undoubtedly the most unbearable source is loud people. The perception of noise in the hospital is generally bearable (61%). It is important to note that the noisiest time coincides with the hours of more activity, although 26% perceive the opposite, indicating that with less activity, noise is more disturbing than in other moments of the day.

Thirty-four percent of participants consider noise to be unbearable at the hospital, and 46% think that noise is high in their work unit. It is also relevant for nurses how long it takes them to fall asleep at home, almost to the point of illness; 35% said it takes them between 30 and 60 minutes to fall asleep (a healthy sleep pattern norm is less than 30 minutes).

Design Implications

Given our findings, strategies need to be implemented particularly in addressing the sources of sound. Some strategies can be applied to architectural and instrumental design (alarms that are too loud; apparatuses with annoying sounds; staff rest areas too close to noise sources such as engines, heating pumps, etc).

Some strategies should address levels of habit (speaking loudly, shouting instead of getting close to pass on information, not switching alarms off soon after checking some information, not reporting a failure when something does not work correctly and is making noise). Healthcare leaders need to continue identifying and minimizing the effects of noises that have the potential to negatively affect the physical and psychological well-being of hospital staff to improve the quality of life in a healthcare environment.