

Providing Quality Patient Care Through Reduction of Errors and Injuries by Reducing Fatigue



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Long Work Hours and Working Nights Causes Fatigue

- ❑ Long working hours, including overtime, is a significant factor in both patient and staff safety.
- ❑ At night, the body clock is set for sleep, yet alertness is crucial to maintain safety in the workplace.
- ❑ After 24 hours of being awake, performance is similar to that of a person with a blood alcohol level of 0.10% (legal limit in B.C. 0.05%).

Fatigue Impacts Quality of Care

- ❑ Working overtime at the end of a shift increases the odds of making at least one error by three times and working more than 50 hours per week increases the risk of making an error by almost two times (Rogers et.al, 2004).
- ❑ Among RN's who work overtime, 22% reported medication errors compared to 14% who did not work overtime (Statistics Canada 2006).
- ❑ RNs who worked overtime were 3X more likely to make an error if they worked shifts >12.5 hrs. (Rogers et al, 2004).
- ❑ Fatigue leads to increased injury to staff, both at work, at home, and when driving home from work (Lockley et al, 2007).

What Other Industries Are Doing

- ❑ Aviation: Planned cockpit nap procedures have been introduced for long-haul routes to decrease crew errors.
- ❑ Rail and Trucking Industries: have limits on how long an individual can be driving – and include requirements for rest breaks.

Project at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)

- Introduce a new policy **“Providing Quality Patient Care Through Reduction of Errors and Injuries by Reducing Fatigue”**.

- **Purpose:**
 - Decrease patient and staff events caused by fatigue.
 - Improve patient flow by eliminating the practice of “combining breaks” on night shift.
 - Continue the implementation of the QWQH Priority Actions at VCH (Priority Action 2: Activity G: Implement a Fatigue Management Policy and Program).

Policy Statements

- ❑ Maximum number of regular hours and overtime hours to be worked in a 7 day period shall not exceed 60 hours.
- ❑ Maximum number of hours worked per 24 hours not to exceed 16 hours.
- ❑ Hours worked anywhere within VCH are included in the calculation of work hours.
- ❑ Shift rotations are to be forward rotations (days to evenings to nights).

Policy Statements

- ❑ When safe to do so, staff are encourage to take an operational nap during their break, providing the break time is no longer than 60 minutes.
- ❑ Employees must not take breaks longer than 60 minutes in duration.
- ❑ Employees must take at least one break prior to the 4th hour of their shift and the other breaks to be distributed evenly throughout the shift.
- ❑ Managers are to work with employees to establish areas and processes for safe napping on breaks.

Policy Development Process/Strategies

- ❑ Analysis of data to determine how many VCH staff are working greater than 60 hours per week or 16 hours per day to establish the need for the policy.
- ❑ Draft policy reviewed and revised through a series of meetings with key stakeholders including professional practice, senior executive, directors/ managers and staff schedulers prior to finalization.
- ❑ Policy reviewed with unions.
- ❑ Discussions with Operations Leaders regarding concerns about combining breaks, especially on night sifts and the impact on patient flow.
- ❑ Shifting to Wellness in Healthcare training has been provided to VCH staff for 4 years. Includes modules on sleep hygiene and safe napping.
- ❑ Implementation committee established, with representatives from Directors, Professional Practice, staff scheduling, human resources, and unions.

Policy Implementation

- ❑ Implementation done in “waves” starting with acute care.
- ❑ Communication plan to all staff regarding the policy and the policy purpose.
- ❑ Inform managers of the policy and provide them with the toolkit of how to implement the policy and establish safe napping areas if possible.
- ❑ Developed processes for time keepers to know who cannot be contacted for additional shifts.
- ❑ Provide additional information for staff regarding safe napping and sleep hygiene for shift workers.