

## PERCEIVED WORKLOAD RELATES WITH STRESS AMONG INTENSIVE CARE UNIT NURSES AT THE NATIONAL HOSPITAL OF SRI LANKA

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**Background:** The high level of workload has been identified as a one of the major problems in health care system globally. Regulating of workload neither being under load nor over load has been identified as the way to prevent possible negative consequences and also for the workers optimal potentiality. Nurses are more vulnerable of being work overloaded particularly nurses in Intensive Care Units (ICU) due to their works are higher demanding in nature and need urgent therapeutic interventions. Similarly, they face a number of stressful events within the working environment.

**Aims:** To examine the perceived workload and it relate with the stress of nurses who are working in ICUs at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL).

**Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted. A random sample of 131 nurses participated. Self administered questionnaire was utilized for the data collection which included The NASA-TLX (National Aeronautic Space Administration- Task Load Index) for assessing perceived workload and the stress scale that was prepared base on the Nursing Stress Scale (NSS) for measuring stress. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences version 18 for Windows.

**Results:** The sample consisted of 102 female (77.9%) and 27 male (20.6%). The ICUs nurses average total perceived workload was 59.75 and Effort Dimension-(physically and mentally tiredness) was rated as the highest (68.0) among the all sub dimensions. 72 nurses (54.9%) presented with stressed (mean 42.92). The most stressful events were rated as; verbal or physical harassment from patients or family members (86%), lack of support from others (80.9%), long duty shifts (81.7%), dealing with high skilled procedures (85.5%) and the continuous changing of patient's condition (83.2%). There were positive correlation between nurses' stress level and total average of workload ( $r = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and for the sub dimensions of workload; Temporal Demand ( $r = 0.194$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ), Frustration ( $r = 0.255$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), Temporal Demand ( $r = 0.194$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ).

**Conclusion:** ICUs nurses perceived moderately higher level of workload as physical and mental tiredness is as their major concern. The majority are at the mild to moderate level of stress. Stress is a significant factor for perceived workload among nurse in ICUs. These findings indicate the need for interventions and strategies to lower the perceived workload with reducing stress among nurses who work in ICUs.