

COVID-19 Pandemic and the Perception of Stress in Intensive Care Nurses

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Abstract

Introduction: The global state of emergency caused by COVID-19 has put tremendous pressure on healthcare services. The high workload, insufficient resources, and excessive stressors of the work environment can negatively affect the intensive care unit (ICU) nurses. Increased workload, physical exhaustion, inadequate personal protective equipment, risk of infection and difficult ethical decisions about care priorities have led to severe psychological stress on health professionals. Nurses are disproportionately affected because they spend more time caring for patients with COVID-19 compared to other healthcare professionals. *Material and Method:* Perceived Stress Scale modified for Covid-19 consisting of 10 items, with answers in the form of Likert scale from 0 to 4 (0 - never, 4 - very often), was used to measure the extent to which certain situations are deemed stressful in the current pandemic context on a sample of 66 nurses in Intensive Care. *Results:* The internal consistency of the scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.768). The majority of respondents (75%) considered that certain situations were perceived as more stressful due to the uncertainty and certain conditions imposed by the epidemiological context. Depending on the seniority in Intensive Care, beginner nurses (up to 1-year-old) perceived certain situations as more stressful than nurses over 15 years old. This situation can be explained in terms of professional knowledge and experience as well as adaptability to the specifics of the work environment.

Keywords: Pandemic; Nurses; Intensive Care Unit (ICU); Stress