

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: Nursing Leadership Interventions and Weight Loss in Nursing Homes

SPECIFIC AIMS

Despite tougher regulations and efforts to improve the quality of care for older persons, concerns about nursing home quality continue to mount. Policymakers, professionals, and care givers implicate nursing staffing as a contributory factor in resident outcomes in nursing homes (Harrington et al., 2000; "Industry, consumer groups square off on minimum nurse staffing requirements," 1999; *Nursing home staffing levels are inadequate in Chicago*, 2001). While outcomes reflect resident health and well-being, recommendations for nursing leadership interventions, including staff hours per resident day, skill mix, length of shifts, staffing patterns, and nurse education, are difficult because there is a paucity of research in this area (Aaronson, Zinn, & Rosko, 1994; Anderson & Lawhorne, 1999; Bowers, Esmond, & Jacobson, 2000; Harrington & Swan, 2003; Munroe, 1990). Without further research on nursing staffing, evidence-based recommendations to guide leadership interventions in nursing homes will not be instituted. Therefore, the needs of older adults will continue to be unmet.

My long-range goal is to develop and test nursing leadership interventions that target quality outcomes of nursing home residents. Nursing leadership interventions are the nursing organizational structure and process specifications defined by a nurse administrator in a health care organization that determine the resources, policies, and procedures for delivering care to residents. Nursing leadership interventions are distinguished from and provide the context that enables or constrains clinical nursing interventions and their effects for individual residents. This study is based on earlier research and work in progress. The *rationale* for the research is that, once the relationship of leadership interventions to outcomes is known, nursing leadership interventions that are predictive of quality outcomes can be developed and tested.

My dissertation used LTC Minimum Data Set (MDS) data from six midwestern states to evaluate the effects of external and internal nursing home factors and nursing staffing, i.e. hours per resident day, on the outcomes of weight loss and dehydration. A small pilot project in progress is using the Delphi method to determine nursing leadership interventions for the outcome of weight loss. Using data from Dr. Rantz's NINR funded study, this proposed study is *an exciting project* that brings together nurse scientists from Illinois State University (ISU), University of Missouri-Columbia (UM-C), University of Wisconsin (UW), and University of Iowa (UI) to investigate the relationship of nursing leadership interventions and the outcome of weight loss. This project benefits from the synergy and commitment of researchers with complementary expertise in the areas of long-term care administration, gerontological nursing, nursing home quality, and nursing effectiveness research. Building upon our previous work experience, the resources of four institutions, and a NINR-funded R-01 with Dr. Rantz as PI, the *research environment* is conducive to completion of the proposed study.

The specific aims of the proposed research are to: 1) to describe nursing leadership interventions used in the states of Missouri, Wisconsin, and Minnesota for the outcome of weight loss in nursing home residents, and 2) determine the relative risk of weight loss explained by nursing leadership interventions; number of nursing staff hours per resident day, skill mix, and external and internal nursing home characteristics after adjusting for internal resident characteristics.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Despite numerous regulations nursing home quality continues to be a major concern. Research suggests that poor quality is due to inadequate numbers and types of nursing staff, yet the relationships of number and types of nursing staff, educational levels of staff, and staffing patterns to specific outcomes are understudied (Dellefield, 2000). The proposed study of the relationship of nursing leadership interventions to the outcome of