

SURGICAL TRAVEL NURSES : THEIR IMPACT ON WORKFORCE MORALE AND PATIENT SAFETY IN THE OPERATING ROOM

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Background Information

Travel nurses fill in staffing gaps that make it possible for institutions to conduct and maintain their normal business operations as well as prevent burnout and fatigue on their resident staff. Currently, because of better monetary and employment benefits, flexible schedules and workloads, there is a rising shift from full time employment to travel nursing assignments.

With the increasing demand for travel nursing positions and the constant shortage of nursing supply, screening of applicants may have been compromised, protocols of recruitment less stricter and nursing quality standards reduced. The lack of clinical experience, competence, expertise, work ethics, camaraderie, procedure, preference and routine familiarity, and navigation instincts in the surgical environment can lead to dissatisfaction by team members and inefficiency in the surgical workplace. However, the one who will suffer most are the surgical patients, who entrust their lives to us, with the belief that we will give them the best possible care in one of the most stressful moments of their lives - their surgical journey.

Study Question

How do Surgical Travel Nurses impact workforce morale and patient safety in the Operating Room?

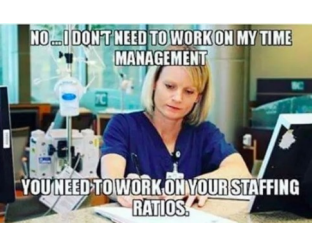
Problem/Purpose

This research aims to explore how OR travel nurses affect teamwork, workplace efficiency and quality of surgical care in the operating room, how to prevent resident staff from considering travel assignments in the future and gain OR nurses' insights and suggestions regarding the qualifications and credentials that OR travel nurses must possess before they are hired and deployed.

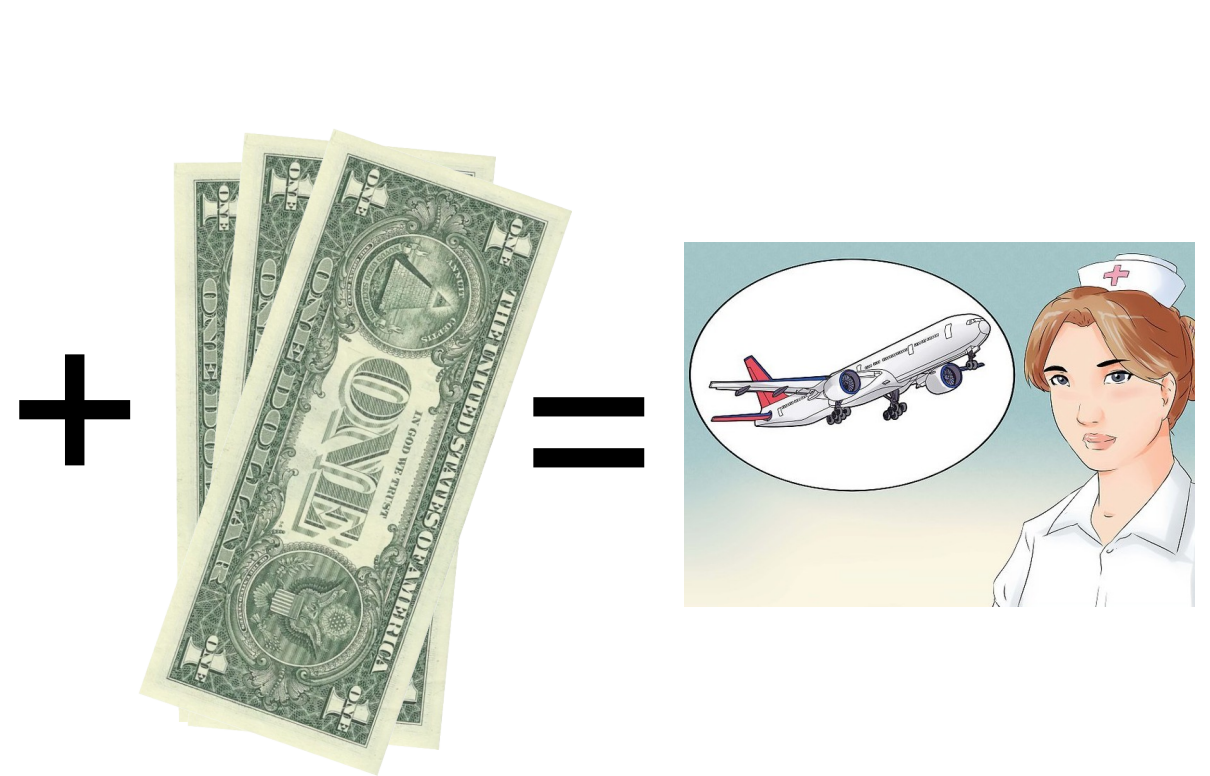
Literature Review

The Covid-19 pandemic paved the way for professionals to discover untapped talents and passions and inspired them to make bolder decisions that empowered them to explore various career paths, thereby creating a "new normal" employment landscape. The healthcare industry, especially its largest labor force (the nurses), were no exception. Nurses, now more determined, fearless, and equipped with lessons learned from the Covid-19 crisis, either quit, retired or headed back to school or pursued non-nursing careers/indirect care roles. The rest that stayed took advantage of the rising demand and opted to settle in nursing fields that offered them recognition, respect, flexibility, and better monetary benefits and working conditions.

Pre-pandemic, Travel Nursing demands had at least a 1-2 % vacancy rate. Post-pandemic, as travel nursing evolved and diversified and nurses became comfortable and confident with the skills and knowledge gained from multiple tours of duties, the employment rate soared to a stable 9-10% or more, especially when halted hospital services were reinstated and more health facilities reopened. This occurrence created unstable changes in nursing supply and demand which further increased the clamor for travel, float, or short term nursing positions nationwide.



Why Do OR Nurses Travel?



* Burnout, job dissatisfaction, financial and structural issues, etc. forced nurses to leave their permanent post and seek travel jobs elsewhere.

Methods, Target Population and Design

Research Design :

Observational Cross- sectional

Target Population :

AORN members and Connecticut OR nurses who are clinically and actively rendering direct surgical nursing care to patients and have surgical travel nurses employed in their facility.

Methods :

The study will utilize an online questionnaire consisting of 10 questions that aims to:

- Explore the effects of hiring surgical nurse travelers in the workplace with consideration to their competence, teamwork, surgical procedure familiarity, financial mindfulness, work ethics, adaptability and compliance to the facility's culture and standards.
- Find out if the participants agree that travel nursing should be regulated, and what are the standards / requirements that should be satisfied prior to being hired/ assigned travel posts.
- Gain AORN members' and Connecticut OR nurses' input as to how healthcare industries and the legislature can improve working conditions and social and financial benefits of OR nurses to prevent their migration to travel nursing positions.

Questionnaires will be distributed via an email invitation link to the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) members.

Data will be collected online using SurveyMonkey and will be analyzed using Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) Studio version 3.81.

Nursing Considerations

Nurses are considered the top workforce task of delivering care and comfort to the global community in this post-Covid era. Having earned the highest confidence rating among all professions, we are the advocates of society destined to safeguard the health and well- being of mankind. Therefore it is our duty to uphold and maintain quality and excellence in our practice if we want to continue that prestigious legacy.

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