

WASHINGTON STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION

RESOLUTION #3

IMPLICATIONS OF FATIGUE ON PATIENT AND NURSE SAFETY

WHEREAS, The use of extended work shifts, overtime and missed breaks has escalated as hospitals cope with a shortage of registered nurses (RNs) and

WHEREAS, The Institute of Medicine and other recent empirical research has demonstrated that risks of nurses making a patient error are significantly increased when work shifts are longer than twelve hours, when nurses work overtime, when they work without rest breaks or when they work more than forty hours per week, and

WHEREAS, The well-documented hazards associated with sleep-deprived resident physicians have influenced changes in house staff rotation policies, and

WHEREAS, No state or federal regulations restrict the number of hours a nurse may voluntarily work in twenty-four hours or in a seven-day period even though they do so for air traffic controllers, train engineers, truck drivers, airline pilots and flight attendants, and

WHEREAS, The ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements clearly articulates the obligation of registered nurses to act in manner that is consistent with maintaining patient and personal safety,

BE IT THEREFORE

RESOLVED, That WSNA develop communications and other strategies to increase awareness of RNs, managers, employers, policy makers and the public of the dangerous impact of fatigue on patient, nurse and public safety, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA urge employers to recognize their legal and ethical obligations to institute scheduling practices and working conditions that avoid placing both patients and RNs at risk, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA continue to advocate for legislative and regulatory remedies to ensure that nurses and the public are protected from the adverse effects of fatigue.

Submitted on behalf of the WSNA Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety
Approved by WSNA Board of Directors, March 5, 2007
Adopted by WSNA General Assembly, May 3, 2007

J:\convention 2007\bylaw-resolution\Resolution 3 - Implications of fatigue final with CIS 042307.wpd

Cost Impact Statement

Justification:

Recent empirical research has demonstrated the relationships between registered nurses (RN) extended hours of work, consecutive shifts worked, RN professional errors or near errors and decline in personal safety. Nurses continue to work long hours that may be either voluntary or employer-driven and that may not be safe for their patients or themselves. It is legally and ethically important that nurses and employers address this issue together to change workplace practices to reduce the incidence and impact of fatigue and improve patient and nurse safety in the workplace .

Proposed Implementation Activities

1. Work with Local Units, District Nurses Associations, the WA Center for Nursing, nursing specialty organizations and the Washington State Hospital Association to educate their constituencies about the dangers of fatigue and their responsibilities as professionals.
2. Educate and inform facility administrators, Boards of Trustees, nurse administrators, nurse managers and Registered Nurses at all levels about the dangers of fatigue to patients and staff and the ethical and legal responsibilities each has to ensure the safety of patients and staff.
3. Conduct regional educational workshops on the ethical, legal and physiological impact of Registered Nurses' fatigue in the workplace.
4. Publish articles in the Washington Nurse and on the WSNA website about the effects of nurses' fatigue.
5. Advocate for legislative and regulatory remedies to ensure that nurses and the public are protected from the adverse effects of fatigue

Possible Benefits:

Increased awareness of nurses, employers, policy-makers and the public of the potential dangers of workplace fatigue on patients, nurses and society; increased support for effective workplace changes to limit dangerous scheduling practices that contribute to fatigue; and improvements in patient and nurse safety and reduction of RN burnout that contributes to the nursing shortage.

Range of Direct Costs:

Direct costs would range from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for costs for developing and conducting the educational workshops and related materials. Additional include costs of activities related to:

- \$ Staff time to develop briefing materials, article for publication and other media strategies
- \$ Staff time to work with the Washington State Department of Health, The Washington Legislature and other appropriate regulatory agencies
- \$ Continued work with WCN, WNLC, employers and other groups to develop comprehensive workplace strategies to address workplace fatigue.

\$

Lobbyist time as needed