

Trust RNs' judgment

Re "Hospitals struggling to meet nurse ratios":

I'm not surprised that the hospitals are struggling, especially when it comes to providing a registered nurse to cover during breaks. What the article failed to note was that these breaks range in length from 10 minutes (as required by the new law to take place before an RN has been on duty for four hours) to the longer breaks, including meals.

As a professional, I think that it is ironic that lives of patients are entrusted to me, but by law I am required to take my breaks at set times. This treats me more like an assembly-line worker than the highly trained and licensed professional that I am.

Many nurses, like myself, prefer to be in control of their break times because we know when it will have the least impact on the care of our assigned patients. It also allows us to provide an environment that is less likely to stress our patients or the nurse that relieves us for that period of time. That's because this nurse, no matter how skilled, does not know our patient as well as the nurse who is charged with that patient's care.

Additionally, this new law has created useless paperwork for the charge nurse, as he/she attempts to ensure that the breaks are being taken at the lawfully required times.

By treating nurses as if they are incapable of deciding when they are in need of a break and having it dictated to them only causes nurses to feel devalued even more. It makes me wonder, if I can't be trusted to make a judgment as to when I should take a break, how can my judgments regarding patient care have any value?

GENEVIVE M. CLAVREUL
PASADENA