Improving patient care by improving nurses' work environment

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While nurse-to-patient ratios are widely recognized as an important factor in determining the quality of patient care, those ratios are not always easy to change without significant cost and investment of resources. What's more, the projected nursing shortage will make it even more difficult for hospitals to increase nurse staffing. A study published in the current issue of *Health Care Management Review* indicates that there are other aspects of registered nurses' (RNs) work environments that RNs perceive can also have a significant impact on the quality of care they deliver. In order of influence, those factors are: physical work environment, workgroup cohesion, nurse-physician relations, procedural justice and job satisfaction. Nurses' ratings of patient care quality were also higher in hospitals with Magnet® recognition programs, and lower in work settings with greater organizational constraints such as lack of equipment and supplies.

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"Health care managers need to think about how they can best redesign RNs' work environments to promote high quality patient care," said Kovner. "They need to examine their resources and determine which changes are possible and which will have the most impact on improving patient care.

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