Respiratory Protection for Occupational Health Nurses
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Background
- The Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report: Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) and Respiratory Protection: Improving Education and Training (2011)
- Seven recommendations to improve OHN Competency in Respiratory Protection (RP), and educate all levels of nurses in respiratory protection
- In December 2011, the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) Grant Committee’s Respiratory Protection Working Group and NIOSH/NPPTL (National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory) partnered to form an Advisory Group with representation from the American Board for Occupational Health Nurses (ABOHN), the Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare (AOHP), the American Nurses Association (ANA), and the IOM Standing Committee on Personal Protective Equipment for Workplace Safety and Health
- Focus of the Advisory Group was on IOM Recommendation 1: Conduct a Survey of OHNs

Survey Aims
- Conduct a survey to assess current OHN roles, responsibilities, and educational preparation & needs in respiratory protection;
- Determine self-perceived level of expertise in RP (novice, beginner, competent, proficient, and expert) and how OHNs achieve and maintain knowledge and skills in RP;
- Identify how OHNs motivate employees to use respirators appropriately.

Methods
- Survey conducted in June 2012, sampling all members of AAOHN (n=5,183), ABOHN (n=4,926), AOHP, (n=1,000) and ANA members (n=249) who identified occupational health as a specialty area.
- 2,263 responded (>30% response rate from each sample); 2,072 were used in this analysis (who had complete data for competence in RP).

Findings
- Competence in Respiratory Protection
- How OHNs Achieved RP Knowledge, n=2,072
- Preferred Methods of Learning by Years of OHN Experience

Selected Demographics (n=2,263)
- Mean years of experience (Standard Deviation) 16.8 (9.1)
- AAOHN member 73%
- AOHP member 17%
- ANA member 9%
- Certified in Occupational Health Nursing 70%
- Working in healthcare sector 35%
- OHN Responsible for Respiratory Surveillance Program at their facility 50%

Techniques to Motivate Respiratory Protection (RP) by Years of OHN Experience

Summary
- 83% of OHNs reported being competent, proficient or expert in RP.
- Years of OHN experience was associated with both comfort and self-perceived RP competency.
- Safety culture was significantly associated with competence and comfort in RP.
- This was a very experienced sample of OHNs who identified OJT as their source of RP knowledge.
- Less experienced OHNs offered case studies, simulations and mentoring as ways to learn; more experienced nursed preferred conferences.
- More experienced OHNs tailored their education to the culture, and used individual goal setting as motivational strategies.
- These data will be used to tailor respiratory protection education for OHNs.

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