

# Operating room nurse: awareness of the risk of burnout and perspectives for a healthy environment

*Enfermeiro de centro cirúrgico: conscientização para o risco de burnout e perspectivas para um ambiente saudável*

*Enfermero de quirófano: conciencia sobre el riesgo de burnout y perspectivas para un ambiente saludable*

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**S**tress, whose manifestations occur through the release of neuroendocrine hormones, has the primary function of ensuring physical and emotional preparedness to face challenging everyday situations. However, when stressful stimuli occur chronically and constantly, they become an aggravating factor for the individual's health and well-being, compromising cognitive assessment and reducing the capacity for adaptive responses to environmental demands. Taking this into consideration, stress, from the perspective of excess demands, is considered one of the biggest villains in society today.

With different specificities, operating room nurses and their team experience stressful situations arising from the most diverse spheres of activity, among which stand out the excessive workload, the scarcity of human resources, the acuity of care involving surgical patients, precarious working conditions, the high technology that surrounds numerous surgical procedures, and the need to acquire new skills for innovative technology in the surgical environment. These are all frequent risk factors that lead to emotional exhaustion and lower organizational engagement.

This context of chronic and constant demands favors professional deterioration and the occurrence of the burnout syndrome (chronic, prolonged, and interpersonal emotional response to work stressors), the most common negative consequence for nurses' health and well-being, related to safety and quality of care. Teymoori et al.<sup>1</sup> classified burnout factors for operating room nurses into four groups:

- organizational: related to managerial competence;
- interpersonal: related to the challenges in working with surgeons and colleagues in the profession;
- the very nature of the profession: emotional involvement and risks inherent in the surgical environment;
- personal: loss of motivation, negative emotional feelings when performing activities.

In this context, moral distress has stood out as an important burnout risk factor for operating room nurses. It is characterized by the existence of ethical dilemmas or complex situations frequently present in daily activity; experience with medical teams guided by conflicts, which makes the relationship between professionals difficult; the crucial organizational policy, which manifests itself as a challenge and impacts decision-making; and legal considerations, which place nurses in confrontation with their own principles and the safety of care<sup>2</sup>.

Still from this perspective of understanding burnout among operating room nurses, unacceptable bullying behaviors are observed as a present, frequent, and often unrecognized culture in the workplace. Direct or indirect behaviors of aggression, humiliation, and intimidation put the health, safety, and productivity of the team at risk<sup>3</sup>.

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With the recognition of the physical and emotional impact of stressors and their consequences on the workplace, well-being policies have been advocated and adopted. The American Academy of Nursing (AAN), in 2018, advocated the creation of policies and strategies to reduce risk focusing on creating healthy and safe environments, with special attention to stressors such as violence and bullying. The same proposal was adopted by the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN), which identified the five main stressors that compromise satisfaction and engagement, making conflict resolution and team relationships difficult<sup>4</sup>. At Magnet<sup>®</sup> hospitals, conducts were instituted to track stressors that lead to adverse events in patient and family care, with the adoption of a prevention model based on three levels of activities (event prevention, reduction of consequences when the event has already occurred, and reduction of the impact of the stressor

when ongoing). In 2020, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) incorporated the concept of well-being in the workplace as one of the levels for achieving excellence in care. From this perspective, the inclusion of support and necessary resources that optimize the health of nursing professionals stands out<sup>5</sup>.

Creating more positive and healthy work environments is an organizational responsibility and, therefore, it is up to leaders to recognize this need and outline strategies to achieve it. At the individual level, it is worth highlighting the importance of practicing self-care with the aim of maintaining a balance between work activities and those that promote personal satisfaction. Recognizing one's own limits becomes essential so that professionals can offer the best in themselves and this can be manifested in work activities and in the personal environment.

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