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# The Effects of Hospital-Mandated Nurse to Patient Ratios on Patient Care

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## Introduction

Nurse to patient ratios or nurse staffing is a controversial topic that is often discussed and argued in the medical field for its pros and cons. Nonetheless, the nurse-to-patient ratio plays a vital role on how nurses' deliver quality care and provide safety to patients in a hospital setting. In 1999, California's legislation passed a mandated nurse to patient ratio (AB 394) that requires all hospitals in California to have a set number of patients a nurse can have depending on the unit the nurse works for. In 2023, California is still the only state that has passed legislation on nurse-to-patient ratio. (Davidson, 2023). The primary objective of this study is to examine the correlation between nurse-to-patient ratios and patient care in a hospital setting. This thesis will evaluate whether lower nurse-to-patient ratios improves quality and safety patient care or decrease patient mortality. Also, this study will compare California's mandated nurse to patient ratio with other states that do not have an implemented nurse to patient ratio.

## Hypothesis

The hospital-mandated nurse to patient ratio will improve overall patient care and safety.

## Methods

**Sample:** This observational research study will consist of 30 med surg patients at Kaiser Terra Linda in Marin City. Those who are excluded from this research study are patients in units other than med surg (ED, ICU, Pediatrics)

**Method:** The med surg patients will be observed over a 30-day time period from the admission date. Patient mortality rates, negative safety factors (falls, HAI's, pressure ulcers due to lack of positioning), and quality of care will all be measured and gathered. The statistics and data collected from the observation will then be compared with previous statistics at Kaiser Terra Linda and other hospitals in California. Surveys will also be provided at the end of the 30-day period to all the registered nurses at Kaiser Terra Linda who work on the med surg unit with the nurse-to-patient ratio. The survey will ask the nurses if they believed they were able to provide quality care to their patients and how many patients they cared for.

**Study Design:** Mixed method of an observational and a quantitative study

## Results

The results of this study will indicate either a decrease or increase in mortality rates and negative safety factors. Also, the results will display an increase or decrease in overall quality patient care.

## Conclusion

There is a correlation between the hospital mandated nurse to patient ratios and patient care. Whether or not states want to implement the nurse-to-patient ratio, it is important for each state to consider the outcomes of nurse-to-patient ratios and continue to research studies that indicate the effect of ratios on patient care to decide.

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