P111

A multinational survey on the workload of nurses caring for people with multiple sclerosis in Europe: final results

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Introduction: MS Nurse PROfessional is an educational programme designed to support nurses caring for people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), serving as a platform to increase knowledge, enhance skills, and share expertise.

Objectives/Aims: As part of advocating to improve working conditions, MS Nurse PROfessional conducted a survey to describe current workload practices of nurses in Europe caring for PwMS (MS nurses), and evaluate their opinions on potential solutions to address tasks that are currently left undone.

Methods: Developed by the Scientific Committee of MS Nurse PROfessional, the online survey included questions around demographics, professional background, and workload management of nurses caring for PwMS. The survey was made available in ten languages and MS Nurse PROfessional community members and other MS nurses were invited to participate.

Results: Between February 1st, 2024, and June 30th, 2024, 108 MS nurses from 15 countries were included in the survey. 74% (n=78) of respondents have a caseload >300 PwMS per year, which equates to a mean average caseload of 516 PwMS per MS nurse. The majority of nurses (69%) spend between 30 minutes and 3 hours on each consultation, including follow-up tasks. The results reveal an important level of specialisation in tasks such as treatment monitoring, management of side effects, symptom management, patient education, and performing diagnostic procedures. Work left undone due to time constraints includes clinical trials, social benefits advice, team consulting, psychological interventions/support, and paperwork completion. Over half of MS nurses surveyed have no or limited administrative support. Findings indicate that the nursing community is advocating for an increase in the number of nurse colleagues, increased access to psychological support for the PwMS, the ability for nurses to refer to a multidisciplinary care team and the ability to independently prescribe certain medications, providing nurses with access to effective databases and software; and increasing access to administrative support for nurses.

Conclusion: This research highlights the expertise and the challenges faced by MS nurses and underscores the urgent need for a systemic change to establish recognised organisational and educational resources and frameworks.

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