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PREVALENCE AND EFFECT OF IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON WITHIN NURSES WORKING IN SPECIALIST ROLE (THE IMP STUDY)

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Impostor Phenomenon was first termed by Clance & Imes in 1978. It describes psychological experiences where highly qualified, experienced individuals believe their success is down to luck. This can leave them feeling like a fraud; potentially leading to anxiety, depression and absence from work (Langford & Clance, 1993).

Through peer discussion, there was anecdotal evidence on their experience of IP. This study was designed to assess the existence and consequences of Impostor Phenomenon (IP) among nurses working in specialist roles in a large NHS teaching hospital in the North East of England.

Between January and March 2019, email invitations were sent to all 304 members (15 male, 289 female) of the 'Nurses in Specialist Roles' Forum. This included a link to a single anonymous online web-based, mixed methods questionnaire, which incorporated the Clance IP Scale (Clance, 1985).

Seventy nine responses were received (9 male, 70 female). Despite having little awareness of IP prior to the study, 68 (86%) staff felt they could relate to it and those who couldn't had moderate to frequent impostor experiences on the Clance Scale. A pragmatic approach to grounded theory was used, drawing qualitative themes from the data; 'lack of confidence', being 'found out' and recognising the difficult 'transition into a new role'.

The results are specific to one Trust and although not generalizable, may be transferable. Introducing formal mentorship and role transition scaffolding, to reduce staff turnover and sick leave has potentially wide reaching benefits for this level of nurses and the NHS.

References

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