Patient Care Assistants Have Higher Injury Rates than Nurses

Background:

- Healthcare workers have some of the highest overall injury rates in the United States and injury rates increase with declining socioeconomic status.
- The non-physician healthcare workforce is largely female with a distribution of race/ethnicity similar to the general population, although with a majority of non-white and immigrant groups employed as lower wage nursing aides with less training than nurses.

Research Conducted:

- Human Resources and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recordable injuries from two large hospitals in Massachusetts were used to compare the injury rates between nurses and aides providing direct patient care. Injury rates were distinguished between those resulting in days away from work and those resulting in no days away from work.

Results:

- Aides have higher injury rates for both types of injuries: days away from work and no days away from work.
- For both nurses and aides, back injuries were the most common days away injuries and sharps (injuries from sharp medical devices) were the most common no days away injuries.

Why this is important:

- Injury data is important as a surveillance mechanism that drives prevention efforts, establishes a health and safety benchmark, and influences policy-making at the institutional and state levels.

Implications:

- We should determine why some groups report higher injury rates and think about which working conditions could be modified to decrease injury rates overall and especially for patient care assistants.

Summary based on the following paper:

Boden LI, Sembajwe G, Tveito TH, Hashimoto D, Hopcia K, Kenwood C, Stoddard AM, Sorensen G. Occupational injuries among nurses and aides in a hospital setting. Am J Ind Med. 2012 Feb;55(2):117-126. doi: 10.1002/ajim.21018.

For more information, please see the Center's website: centerforworkhealth.sph.harvard.edu.

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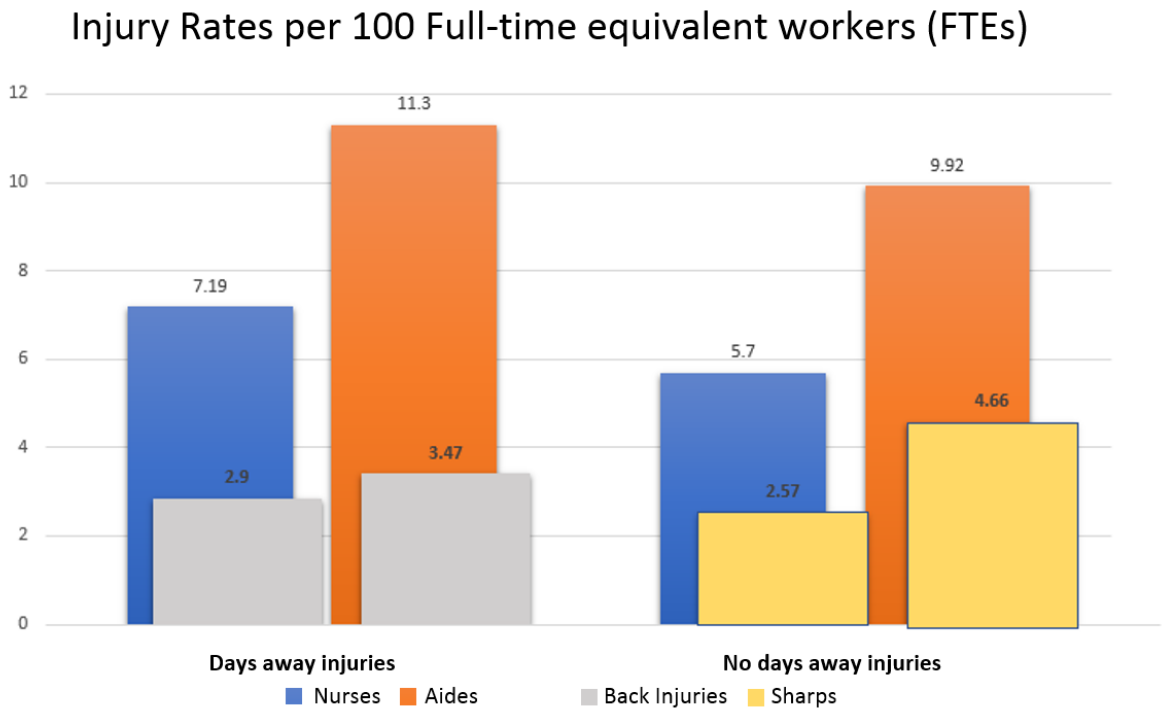

Boden et al. (2012)