

AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION BACKGROUND

PressRoom@ana.org, (301) 628-5197

www.NursingWorld.org

2011 ANA HEALTH & SAFETY SURVEY HAZARDS OF THE RN WORK ENVIRONMENT

Nurses face many hazards on the job. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show registered nurses (RNs) ranked fifth of all occupations in 2010 in the number of work days missed due to occupational injuries and illnesses.

Workplace hazards include manual lifting of patients, needles, physical assault, and exposure to infectious diseases and toxic chemicals. Fatigue from overwork and stressful conditions strains RNs' health.

ANA surveyed RNs in 2011 to determine workplace hazards and compare results to a similar 2001 survey. Results from 4,614 responses indicate that the work environment has improved overall, especially the availability of mechanical lifting technology and needles with engineered safety protections. Yet nurses are still developing back, neck and shoulder pain on the job, and health and safety concerns influence their decision to continue to practice.

Here's a summary of key findings (2001 results, when available, in parentheses):

Top 3 Concerns

These concerns also were most prevalent in 2001. A chronic nursing shortage exacerbates problems of fatigue and burnout.

- Effects of stress and overwork — 74% (70%)
- Disabling musculoskeletal injury — 62% (59%)
- Contracting an infectious disease — 43% (37%)

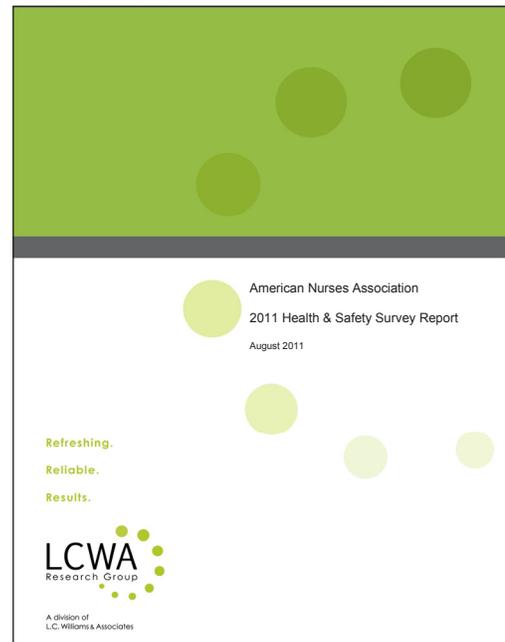
Diminishing Concerns

- Getting HIV or hepatitis from a needlestick — 21% (45%)
- Developing a latex allergy — 6% (21%)

Safe Patient Handling

More nurses have access to mechanical lifting devices, but the devices may be underused.

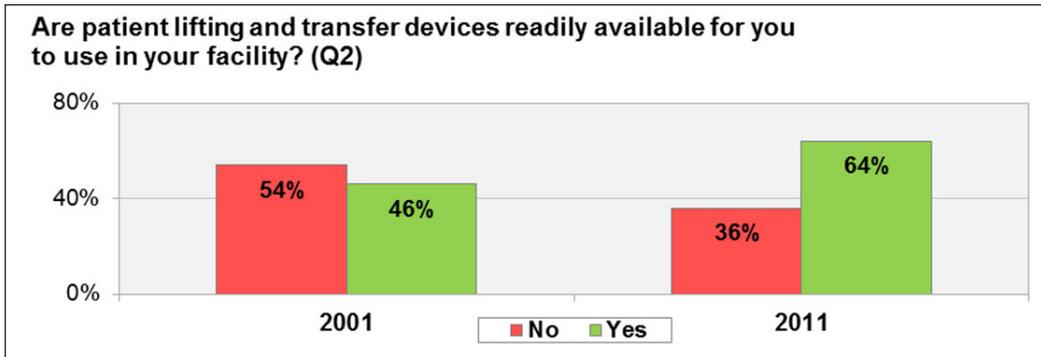
- Patient lifting and transfer devices are readily available — 64% (46%)
- Frequency of use, when devices are available — 31% frequently; 48% not frequently



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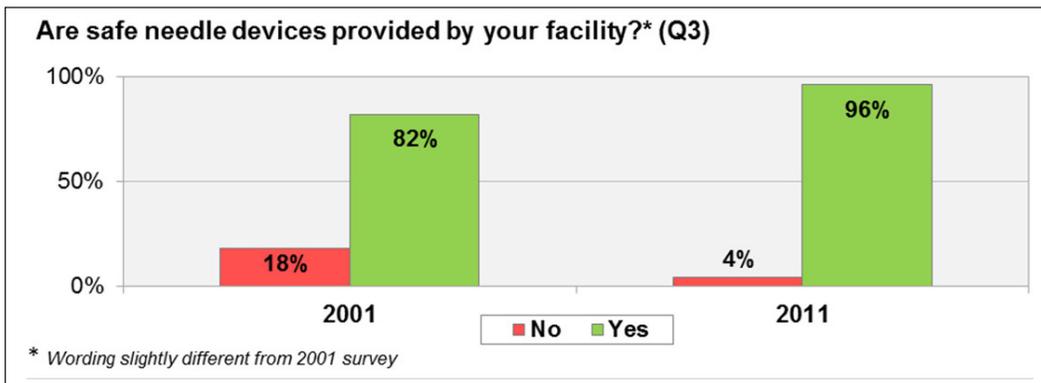
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Safe Needles

Employers have been more responsible about providing safe needle technology since passage of the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act in 2000, but some nurses are unaware of their rights to participate in the selection process.

- Safe needle devices provided in the workplace — 96% (82%)
- Percentage saying nurses were not involved in the needle selection process or didn't know — 62%



Absence due to Work-Related Illness and Injury

Most nurses didn't miss work due to work-related injury or illness.

- Missing at least 1 work day in 12-month period due to work-related illness — 19%
- Missing at least 1 work day in 12-month period due to work-related injury — 10%

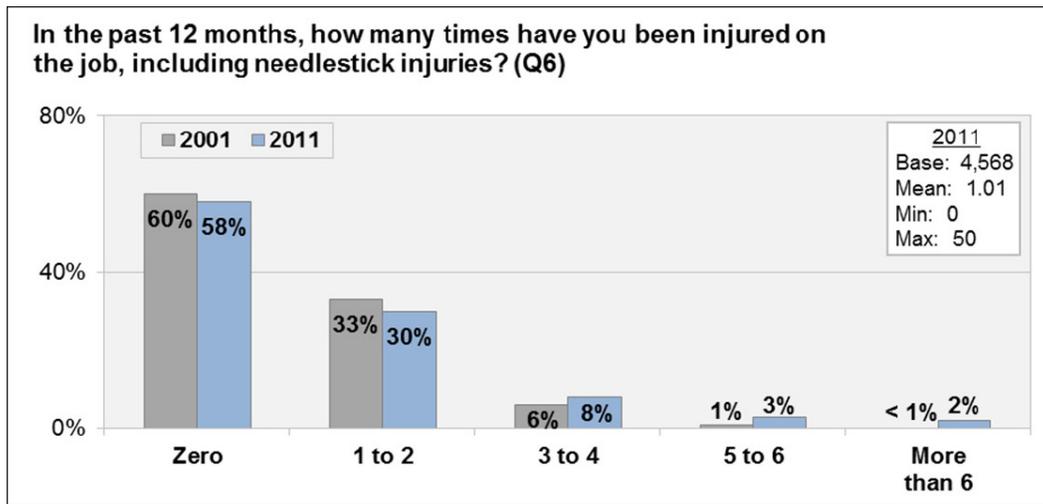
Experiencing Harm on the Job

Many nurses are working with pain or have been injured.

- RNs who have experienced musculoskeletal pain caused or made worse by their job in 12-month period — 56%
- RNs who frequently worked despite experiencing musculoskeletal pain — 80%
- RNs who have been injured on the job at least once in 12-month period — 42%

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Physical Assault/Verbal Abuse

Both incidences show declines since 2001, but the threat of assault remains a high concern.

- RNs physically assaulted in 12-month period — 11% (17%)
- RNs threatened or verbally abused in 12-month period — 52% (57%)
- RNs ranking “on-the-job assault” as a top-three safety concern — 34% (25%)

Health and Safety Perceptions and Career Decisions

About 6 in 10 nurses say they feel safe from incurring illness or injury in their work environments. The same percentage says health and safety concerns influence their decisions about continuing in nursing practice.

For more information, visit these websites:

2011 Health and Safety Survey: www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/WorkplaceSafety/Work-Environment/2011-HealthSafetySurvey.html

Safe Patient Handling: www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/WorkplaceSafety/SafePatient

Needlestick Injury Prevention: www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/WorkplaceSafety/SafeNeedles

Workplace Violence: www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/WorkplaceSafety/workplaceviolence

Nursing Shortage: www.nursingworld.org/FunctionalMenuCategories/MediaResources/MediaBackgrounders/Nursing-Shortage-Backgrounder.pdf

The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

