Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is one of the most common occupational diseases and the second most self-reported occupational illness or injury (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health). (NIOSH, 2001).

Noise, or sound intensity, is measured in units called decibels (dBs or dBA). NIHL may occur immediately from a brief loud noise exposure or slowly over years of continuous exposure. Normal conversations levels occur at average of 60 decibels and excess noise is generally considered to be exposure at 85 decibels over an eight hour period (Brown, 2004).

Hospital Working Environment

Hospital noise levels have steadily increased over the past five decades from a daytime of 57 decibels to 72; nighttime levels increased from 42 decibels to 60. (Johns Hopkins Institute, 2005)


Noise Reduction Interventions for Hospital Environment and Workforce

- Install a muffler or build an acoustic barrier such as acoustic ceiling tiles (NIOSH, 2001; John Hopkins Institute, 2005);
- Eliminate/decrease overhead paging and use alternative communication such as pagers, cell phones (John Hopkins Institute, 2005; Cmiel et al., 2004);
- Foam padding the bottom and sides of the pneumatic tube system and chart holders (Cmiel et al., 2004);
- Staff education to abate noise by decreasing conversations, activities, television volume, closing patients’ room doors, lower rings on equipment, and muffle peeps on pumps when reprogramming by holding your hand over the speaker (Cmiel et al., 2004); and
- Provide protectors, such as ear plugs or ear muffs, when feasible (NIOSH, 2001; Brown, 2004)

Resources for Nurses With Hearing Loss

The Association for Medical Professionals with Hearing Losses: www.amphl.org

Exceptional Nurse: www.ExceptionalNurse.com

Promoting Awareness in Healthcare, Medical and Deaf: http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/ncdhr/training/hospital.cfm

References


The WorkForce Advocacy Program (WFA) within FNA supports nurses in personal and professional growth and development in the practice setting to promote positive work-related experiences. WFA collaborates with internal and external stakeholders to provide services and develop policies that positively impact the work environment.

The purposes of the FNA WFA program are:

- Serve as the sole exclusive Workforce advocacy program for FNA.
- Support nurses in personal and professional growth and development in the practice setting to promote positive work-related experiences.
- Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to provide services and develop policies that positively impact the work environment.