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Vice President for Equality and Diversity, NUI Galway: Jun 2016 - present
Executive Dean, Liverpool John Moores University: Aug 2014 - Jul 2016
Deputy President / Registrar, Dublin City University: Feb 2009 to Sep 2012
Deputy President, Dublin City University: 2006 – 2009
Professor & Head, School of Nursing, Dublin City University: 2000 – 2006
Editorial Board Membership: Nursing Philosophy, Medical Humanities and International Journal of Nursing Studies
Specialist reviewer: Journal of Medical Ethics, Nursing Ethics, Palliative Medicine and Australian Journal of Bioethics
Special Advisor to the Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Health, Ireland, Taskforce on Nurse Staffing: 2014 - present



Keynote address 3: Resource allocation and rationing: the case of nursing

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Abstract:

The aim of this discussion paper is to consider issues of resource allocation and rationing as they relate to nursing care and the distribution of the nursing resource.

As health systems struggle with issues of expenditure and sustainability nurse staffing is a regular focus of attention. Studies emerging internationally highlight instances of covert rationing/missed care/care left undone - suggesting that nurses, in certain contexts, are actively engaged in rationing care. Rationing of care is therefore occurring, whether or not these rationing decisions are explicit.

In terms of the nursing and nursing ethics literature there appears to be a dearth of explicit decision making frameworks within which to consider rationing of nursing care. In reality the assumption of policy makers and health service managers is that nurses will continue to provide full care – despite reducing staffing levels and increased patient turn over, dependency and complexity of care. Often, it would appear, rationing/missed care/nursing care left undone is a direct response to overwhelming demands on the nursing resource in specific contexts. A discussion of resource allocation and rationing in nursing therefore seems timely.

What do resource allocation and rationing within the context of nursing care mean? What are the overlaps in these two concepts and what other factors may need to be taken into consideration to ensure the most effective use of the available nursing resource?