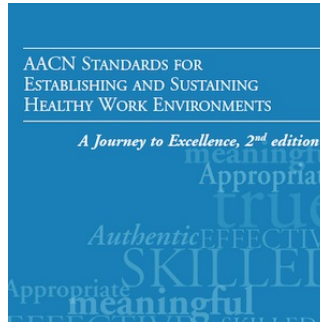## Standards for Healthy Critical Care Work Environments Updated

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) has announced the publication of the 2nd edition of its Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments. The standards, first published in 2005, identified previously discounted systemic behaviours that can result in unsafe conditions, and focus on the human factor. The Association recognised that unhealthy work environments contribute to medical errors, ineffective delivery of care, and stressed healthcare professionals. AACN's critical care nurse work environment surveys have shown that collaboration with physicians and administrators is among the most important elements in creating a healthy work environment.

The Association notes: "At no other time in health care's history has there been more turbulence, rapid change, or complexity. Today's work environments demand even more attention to the fundamental issues of these standards, because stakes are high, and patients' lives depend on it."

See Also: Humanising Intensive Care - Declaration of Torrejón

The standards are designed to foster healthy work environments and thus contribute to ensuring patient safety and optimal outcomes, enhancing staff recruitment and retention, and maintaining health care organisations' financial viability. They represent evidence-based and relationship-centered principles of professional performance.

There are 6 standards:

1. **Skilled communication -** equal proficiency in communication and clinical skills
2. **True collaboration** - relentless pursuit and fostering of true collaboration
3. **Effective decision making** - valued and committed partners in leading organizational operations
4. **Appropriate staffing** - effective match between patient needs and nurse competencies
5. **Meaningful recognition** - authentic acknowledgement of the value each person brings to the work of the organization.
6. **Authentic leadership** - adoption of the HWE imperative and engagement of others to achieve it.

The standards are available for download from the AACN website. Healthcare professionals can use the online assessment tool to survey staff, compare their results with industry standards and develop step-by-step strategies to improve performance, patient safety, staff recruitment and retention, and their workplace environment.

Source and image credit: American Association of Critical-Care Nurses

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