

# **Buffer patients in distributing nursing service resource - capturing their restricted opportunities in capability approach**

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## **Abstract**

**Background:** The capability approach has been applied to healthcare, and aims to improve patients' well-being in their diverse lifestyles, reflecting their sense of value. Recently nurse staffing has been increased for qualified nursing care, so it can be evaluated based on capability approach. It is a problem of lost opportunity of care that care for 'buffer' patients are sometimes skipped or postponed, for controlling uncertain balance between care needs and provision.

**Aim:** Through empirical data analysis and theoretical development based on the capability approach, this study aims to capture the restricted capability of patients to achieve well-being and independent living, by the differences in nurse staffing and patients' care needs.

**Methods:** The inquiry was carried out in 2005-2009 using questionnaires. Using responses of 1972 hospitalised patients, individuals' achievement in functionings 'being neat' and 'having daily life skills' are analysed according to the differences in individuals' independence in mobility and nurse staffing at least '7 patients per nurse' or not. Next, from the features of empirical estimation of capability set according to mobility and nurse staffing, space of goods and utilisation ability are formulated based on capability approach.

**Results:** Restricted capability set are observed for more independent patients under lower nurse staffing, and is extended toward a functioning 'having daily life skills' by increasing nurse staffing. On the other hand, both functioning 'being neat' and 'having daily life skills' of more dependent patients indicates satiated, and no extension in capability set by increasing nurse staffing. The 'buffer' patients are suggested to shift from independent to dependent patients by increasing nurse staffing.

**Keywords:** capability approach, patients' opportunity, nurse staffing, uncertainty

**JEL codes:** I19, I31, D69

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