Critical Care Nurses’ Reasons for Working or Not Working Overtime

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BACKGROUND
Around the world, registered nurses are working increasing amounts of overtime. This is particularly true in critical care environments, which experience unpredictable fluctuations in patient volume and acuity, combined with a need for more specialized nurses.

OBJECTIVE
To explore critical care nurses’ reasons for working or not working overtime.

METHODS
A semistructured interview guide was used to interview 28 frontline nurses from 11 critical care units in Ontario, Canada. Analysis was guided by Thorne’s interpretive description methodology.

RESULTS
Participants’ reasons for working overtime included (1) financial gain (96% of participants); (2) helping and being with colleagues (68%); (3) continuity for nurses and patients (39%); and (4) accelerated career development (39%). Their reasons for not working overtime were (1) feeling tired and tired of being at work (50%); (2) having established plans (71%); and (3) not receiving enough notice (61%).

CONCLUSIONS
Findings from this study provide important variations and extension of existing literature on the topic, and appear to be the first reported in Canadian critical care units. Additional research is required to understand administrative decision-making processes that lead to the use of overtime.
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If you want to become a critical care nurse, there are a lot of questions you will need to answer first. The first thing you need to ask yourself is whether you truly want to make a career with this... To work in this field, you must be prepared to spend long hours on your feet and it is not uncommon for nurses to develop back problems because of this and due to the fact that they have to move and lift patients. The biggest challenge, however, is that you will have to work with patients who are critically ill. This means you have to have a strong disposition and be able to detach yourself emotionally to some degree. 

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