



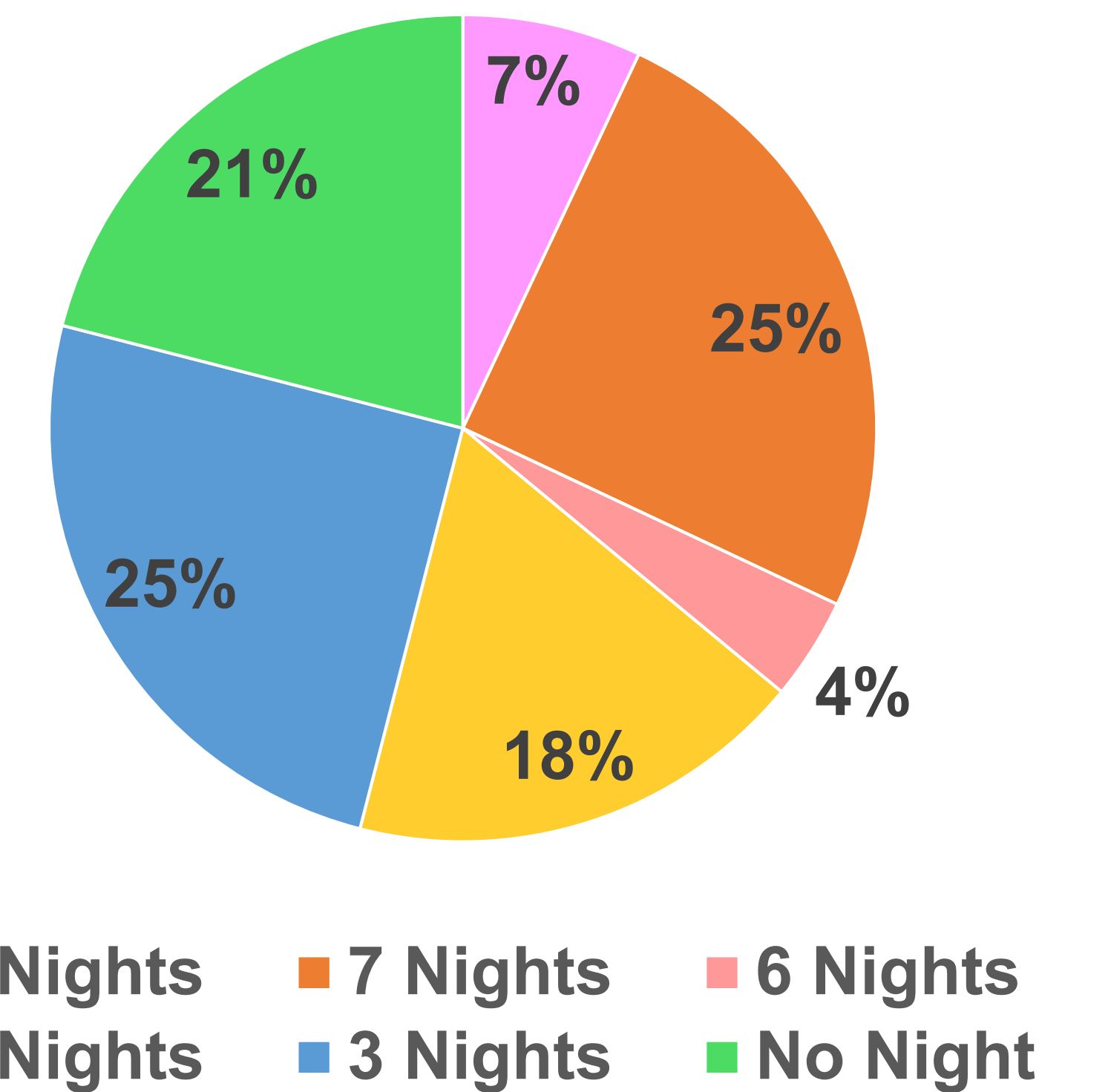
# Implementation of a 5/6 – Day Work Schedule for Nurses in a Singapore Hospice: A Pre- and Post- Implementation Survey Study

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## Background

**Workforce sustainability** and **nurses' well-being** are critical in the **palliative care setting**, where palliative care nurses face significant **emotional** and **physical** demands. Workforce sustainability is not merely about filling rosters but about **preserving the nurses** who deliver care.

Prior to 2025, nurses at Dover Park Hospice (DPH) worked on schedules that allowed **only 4–6 rest days per month**, with **unequal distribution of man-hours** averaging 37– 41 hours per week. 50% of nurses had 4 rest days, 43% had 5 rest days, and only 7% had 6 rest days. **Night shift allocation further reflected this imbalance**: 7% of staff worked 8 nights, 25% worked 7 nights, 4% worked 6 nights, 18% worked 4 nights, and 25% worked 3 nights, while 21% did not undertake night duties (Healthcare Assistants/Attendants, pregnant staff, or those on light duty). In Jan 2025, **DPH implemented a New 5/6 Day work week schedule** – alternating between 5 working days for 2 weeks and 6 working days for 2 weeks. The new schedule would result in **longer shifts** (30 to 60 min per shift) but more **equitably distributed working hours** (41 hours per week) as well as the benefit of **2 additional rest days** from 4 to 6 per month for all nurses.



## Aims & Methods

This study aims to evaluate the impact of a new 5/6-day work week schedule. Inpatient ward nurses at DPH were selected through **purposive sampling**. This sampling method allow us to focus on the nurses whose schedules are directly affected. A **pre-implementation semi-structured survey** (11/06/2024–16/06/2024, n=64) assessed satisfaction with the existing schedule and preferences. The 5/6-day work week was implemented on 20/01/2025. A follow-up **post implementation survey** (14/04/2025–20/04/2025, n=66) assessed satisfaction with the new schedule. Both surveys were anonymous, ensuring confidentiality and data integrity.

## Results of Study

### Pre-Implementation Survey

- 50% Satisfied with current schedule
- 62.5% reported negative work-life impact
- 75% wanted longer shifts for more rest days
- 63.9% open to a schedule with 2 nights shift
- 70.3% supported the adoption of 5/6 Days work week

The Pre-implementation survey revealed **50% satisfaction** with the existing, with **62.5%** reporting **negative impact on work-life balance** with current schedule. Most nurses (**75%**) preferred **longer shifts** with 6 rest days per month, and **63.9%** were open to 2 nights shifts. Overall, **70.3% supported adopting a 5/6-day work week**, indicating readiness for change.

Concerns on **allowances** and **longer hours** were addressed during the monthly department meeting through reassurance of unchanged pay, clarification that shifts extend only 30–60 minutes to protect training time, and the provision of 2 additional rest days monthly.

### Post-Implementation Survey

- 92.4% were satisfied with the new schedule
- 84.8% reported improved work-life balance
- 87.9% have adequate personal time outside of work
- 93.8% wants to retain the new schedule

**3 months** post-implementation, a follow-up survey was conducted to assess nurses' responded to the new schedule. The response shows that:

- **92.4%** were **satisfied** with the new schedule
- **84.8%** reported that their work-life balance has **improved**
- **87.9%** felt they had **sufficient personal time outside of work**

Finding of the survey were shared at a department meeting, where key challenges were also addressed. One of the **challenges** includes **rest day were not well distributed**. This has been addressed that the rest day distribution could be due to nurses' requests. Roster markers are encouraged to give 2 weekend rest days within a month.

Another challenge highlighted was the **nurses' preferences for 2 nights shift** instead of 4. Therefore, nurses suggested to have 3 rounds of 2 night shift per month. However, with 3 rounds of 2 nights shift, there will be a week where there is no rest day and that is not ideal. Despite the challenges, **93.8% of nurses wanted to retain the new schedule**.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
N	N	OO	OO	PI	PI	A	A	PI	PI	N	N	OO	OO	PI	PI	A	A	PI	PI	A	N	N	OO	OO	PI	PI	A

## Discussion

The 5/6-day work week **increased nurses' satisfaction** from 50% to 92%. Prior to implementation, 62.5% reported poor work-life balance; following the change, 84.8% indicated **improvement**, including those who had not previously reported difficulties. Nurses also noted having **more personal time**, allowing for **better rest and recovery** from the emotional and physical demands of palliative care. Such recovery is essential to prevent burnout and promote well-being. Importantly, 93.8% wished to continue with the new schedule, underscoring its role in workforce sustainability. This was further supported by objective indicators, with **ad hoc leave usage decreasing by 2.5 days and overtime by 36.5 days** since implementation.

## Conclusion

**Staff engagement** prior to implementation was critical—our pre-survey created buy-in. Change was more readily accepted when it **addressed key staff pain points**, including shift allowances, longer working hours, uneven rest day distribution, and preferences for fewer night shifts. Ongoing monitoring is essential to ensure both short-term impact and long-term sustainability. At DPH, the 5/6-day work week significantly improved nurse satisfaction and work-life balance. Moving forward, we will further evaluate its effect on staff attrition.

### Acknowledgement:

Special thanks to the inpatient ward nurses for their time to participate in the surveys and their honest feedbacks. Dover Park Hospice Management for supporting in this pilot.