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Warning on ward **deaths**  
  
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Wards with more **nurses** have lower **death** rates but boosting numbers of less qualified staff may have the opposite effect, according to a study.

**Death** rates in wards where the **ratio of patients to nurses** was lower than six to one were 20 per cent lower than in wards where the **ratio** was higher than ten to one. However, hospitals with high numbers of support workers, such as healthcare assistants and auxiliary **nurses,** had higher **death**rates.

The researchers, from King's College London and the University of Southampton, said that their findings should be a warning for NHS bosses against "current policies geared towards substituting healthcare support workers for registered **nurses**". Jane Ball, principal research fellow, added that on average healthcare assistants in England had less than two weeks' training.

Another study, in Archives of Disease in Childhood, found that a drop in the number of **nurses** caring for sick newborns was leading to higher **death** rates.

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