

The Role of Nursing in Enhancing Patient Experience in Critical Care Units

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ABSTRACT

As the backbone of critical care teams, nurses play a crucial role in ensuring patient safety, advocating for optimal care, and fostering a supportive environment. This review article explores the indispensable role of nurses in critical care settings, focusing on their multifaceted responsibilities, impact on patient outcomes, and the evolving nature of critical care nursing. It also discusses the growing influence of technology, ethical considerations, and potential avenues for further research in critical care nursing. Critical care nurses face many challenges, and the article highlights the importance of ongoing education, advanced training, and effective communication skills.

KEYWORDS: Role of Nursing, Enhancing, Patient Experience, Critical Care Units.

1. Introduction

Patient-centered care, which is acknowledged as a successful paradigm for enhancing health care outcomes, is also given priority in intensive care units (ICUs). However, the intensive care unit is a complicated place, and because of their severe condition, patients frequently have trouble communicating and participating in their own treatment. In this context, medical professionals often use family members as patient surrogates. As a result, it is crucial to ascertain their preferences, share information, and include family members in ICU care planning and treatment decisions. Additionally, the collaborative process between health care providers and families has been highlighted, and numerous research employing PFCC have recently urged families to participate in patient care (Joo et al., 2024).

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In addition to outlining the fundamental ideas of Patient- and Family-Centered Care (IPFCC), such as respect and dignity, information sharing, participation, and collaboration, they defined the term as "an approach to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of healthcare that is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships among healthcare providers, patients, and families." These fundamental ideas emphasize that when healthcare professionals take into consideration patients' individual values, provide pertinent information promptly, promote involvement in decision-making, and cultivate cooperation beyond treatment, the quality of care increases (Joo et al., 2024).

Critical care Critically ill patients are cared for by nurses in intensive care units (ICUs), and part of their job description may involve interacting with the patients' family members and caregivers. In order to thoroughly assess the needs of patients and their families, nurses working in such environments must make prompt decisions based on their expertise, which calls for a high degree of communication ability. The goal of nurse communication is to maximize patient care. A key element of nursing is therapeutic communication, which entails using particular techniques to support patients in expressing their thoughts and feelings as well as to show acceptance and respect. Focusing on the patient and demonstrating real empathy are essential for developing a successful therapeutic alliance (Lee & Yi, 2017).

The capacity to comprehend and experience another person's feelings is known as empathy. It takes accurate evaluation of the patient's circumstances, communication with the patient, and action to support the patient in order to demonstrate empathy. In addition to having a significant favorable impact on the patient's recovery, confident nursing has a positive impact on job satisfaction through effective communication based on empathy. On the other hand, ineffective communication causes patients to complain and feel anxious, and it can also result in other detrimental consequences like longer hospital admissions, higher mortality, burnout, stress at work, and turnover (Lee & Yi, 2017).

Therefore, as good communication is crucial for critical care nurses, communication experiences need to be investigated. In order to present new information, promote comprehension of patients' reactions to health issues, investigate options for care, assist in decision-making, and promote patient wellbeing, nurses employ curative communication skills. In particular, communication that is focused on the patient and their family helps to improve the quality of care and promote patient safety. Nonetheless, critical care nurses' communication skills are not as well-developed as those of ward nurses or younger, less experienced nurses in comparison to their older, more seasoned peers. This necessitates analyzing critical care nurses' entire communication experiences (Yoo et al., 2020).

2. Literature review

Patients and family members are affected by critical illness. Research indicates that extended stays in intensive care units (ICUs) are linked to psychological, mental, cognitive, and physical side effects for ICU survivors. These effects may last for a

long time following ICU discharge (Post-ICU Syndrome). Sharing decision-making during an intensive care unit stay with family members might exacerbate the worry and depression that come with having a loved one in the ICU. Additionally, healthcare workers who work in intensive care units encounter difficult circumstances that elicit conflicting feelings like loneliness, grief, rage, humiliation, love, and happiness (Latour et al., 2022).

To direct and evaluate our efforts, we measure certain patient experience factors during intensive care unit admission, such as pain, sedation, and sleep quality. The ICU survivors may have real or illusory memories of their experience, and they do so to differing degrees. A global indicator of patient ICU experience may be possible through the measurement and comprehension of recalled patient distress (Latour et al., 2022).

For many patients, the intensive care unit is a crucial part of their treatment. Patients can be moved to the general ward to provide continuity of care once they are stable enough to be cared for on a step-down basis. One of the most difficult, dangerous, and ineffective care transitions is the patient's discharge or transfer from the intensive care unit to a general ward. This is because patients who are among the most critically ill are moved from high-tech units to less acute settings, involving numerous professionals in the sharing of information and duties. As a result, the process of ICU discharge is complicated, and patients' thoughts and feelings—such as a sense of loss of autonomy, worry, and displacement—are also very important. Lack of medical knowledge and losing control over one's body are regarded to be the primary causes of patients' feelings of helplessness in this situation (De Grood et al., 2018).

To give patients with life-threatening diseases the best care possible, critical care nurses must possess specific knowledge and abilities in a dynamic and challenging area. This review is to provide a thorough overview of the vital role that nurses play in critical care settings, highlighting the difficulties they encounter, their influence on patient outcomes, and the changing field of critical care nursing (Cuzco et al., 2021).

1. The Multifaceted Responsibilities of Critical Care Nurses

Among the many duties performed by critical care nurses are ongoing observation, evaluation, and treatment of patients suffering from serious diseases or injuries. They are responsible for advanced life support, drug delivery, and interdisciplinary care team coordination. This section emphasizes how critical care nurses' responsibilities involve a delicate balancing act between technical expertise, critical thinking, and compassionate patient care. Critical care nurses serve at the frontline of healthcare, giving specialized care to patients with life-threatening diseases. Their duties cover a broad spectrum of complex tasks that call for a special combination of technical expertise, critical thinking, and compassionate patient care (Cuzco et al., 2021).

Since they are the ones who plan, coordinate, and execute the direct patient care interventions throughout the transition, the nurses in the ICU's multidisciplinary team play a crucial part in the planning process for the ICU transition. Therefore, it is the duty of nurses to evaluate patients' requirements during the transition and to give

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the patient and family the necessary information and instruction. Some hospitals have even created a new nursing position called "liaison nurse" to increase the effectiveness of ICU nurses' roles in patients throughout their transition. It has also been emphasized how capable ICU nurses are in organizing and overseeing the execution of a multidisciplinary program during ICU transfer that may lower hospital mortality and ICU readmission rates (Alberto et al., 2016).

1.2 Continuous Monitoring and Intervention

Using advanced equipment to monitor vital signs, evaluate organ function, and spot any minor changes that could be symptoms of clinical deterioration, critical care nurses are at the forefront of continuous patient monitoring. By preventing or reducing adverse events and maximizing patient outcomes, this ongoing awareness enables prompt action. Expert critical care nurses are distinguished by their capacity to identify early warning indicators and take swift action (Lewis et al., 2018).

Another intervention that was examined was the assessment and monitoring of patients by an advanced practice nurse working in a multidisciplinary team upon ICU release. Three studies using two distinct denominations—nurse-led and case management—reported this role. Advanced practice nurses have just recently been involved in intensive care unit discharge, despite being a part of multidisciplinary teams to care for patients with complex needs for more than 20 years. These new positions offer a chance to assist patients and their families in regaining control over their lives and adjusting to life outside of the intensive care unit (Lewis et al., 2018).

1.3 Medication Administration and Treatment Coordination

Medication administration in critical care calls for accuracy and a keen awareness of possible side effects. Critical care nurses are in charge of giving a wide range of medications, adjusting dosages, and closely observing patients' reactions. Additionally, they facilitate smooth communication between doctors, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, and other medical specialists by acting as coordinators in interdisciplinary teams. Treatment results are improved by this partnership, which promotes a synergistic approach to patient care (Cuzco et al., 2021).

1.4 Patient empowerment

Being aware of the symptoms and indicators of emotions of helplessness is another method that nurses can start to help their patients regain control. In order to enable patients to go past their passive role and actively participate in the decision-making process about their health and quality of life, the multifaceted and intricate notion of empowerment was established. When patients accept that their identity and sense of security are at danger and feel in charge of their life, they are successfully empowered. Enhancing empowerment has many advantages, such as lowering stress and anxiety levels, enhancing one's sense of unity and control over the circumstances, fostering personal growth and development, and enhancing comfort and inner fulfillment (Lambrinou et al., 2019).

One potential strategy to lessen the anxiety related to ICU discharge is patient empowerment. The use of empowerment techniques has grown in recent years,

mostly in the context of self-care for chronic conditions including diabetes, cancer, and other clinical situations. Their function in ICU discharge is less well understood, nevertheless. Although the diverse healthcare team is in charge of this, nurses typically handle this transition, which includes patient empowerment (Lambrinou et al., 2019).



Figure 1. Main findings of patient empowerment strategies performed by nurses (Bucknall et al., 2020).

To decide where, how, and when to act and make sure the patient is emotionally ready for the transition from the intensive care unit to the general ward, it is important to assess the emotional states of the patients. One of the primary objectives of patient empowerment at this point is situational control. ICU patients frequently feel as though they have lost control of their lives, especially those with serious illnesses that necessitate sedation and mechanical support, rendering them completely dependent and incapable of making decisions for themselves (Bucknall et al., 2020).

When faced with this circumstance, patients must learn to rely on others and accept the way they perform treatments, which leads to a loss of control and a sense of powerlessness. Complications and a sluggish recovery also lead to delays in transfer to the general ward, which exacerbates the sense of helplessness every day. Thus, it is essential to establish a setting where giving the patient back control of the situation is given top priority, and nurses are in charge of making sure that patients may get information in a way that meets their expectations (Bucknall et al., 2020).

1.5 Coordinating Care

The results of this study show that nurses behave professionally by following professional ethics, implementing policies, and coordinating communications with patients, their families, and team members. By adhering to the nursing process and taking the system as a whole into consideration, they also exhibit holistic care. Conversely, healthcare institutions play a significant role in assuring safe care by providing proper equipment and preserving environmental safety. By providing a safe atmosphere and dependable equipment, a safety-focused organization can improve the provision of safe care to patients in the intensive care unit (Tajari et al.,

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In addition to improving staff productivity and lowering the chance of errors, this also guarantees patient safety and eventually improves patient outcomes and the standard of treatment. By hiring qualified employees, keeping an eye on their performance, and attending to their training needs, healthcare organizations can create an environment that promotes safe patient care. Competent nurses can provide patients with safe, high-quality care by providing comprehensive, methodical treatment. It is crucial to stress that cooperation between healthcare organizations, nurses, and other healthcare professionals is required to achieve the intended results (Tajari et al., 2024).

Because patient situations can change quickly in critical care settings, prompt and deliberate decision-making is essential. To maximize patient outcomes, nurses need to be ready to evaluate circumstances, rank interventions, and interact with the care team in an efficient manner. A hallmark of critical care nursing is the capacity to make wise choices under duress. This difficulty emphasizes the value of continual learning, simulation practice, and developing critical thinking abilities (Tajari et al., 2024).

1.6 Team monitoring for life preservation

Alarms are needed in the intensive care unit for several reasons. They help with health care, provide as reminders, and make forecasts. Every alert must be handled cautiously in order to save the patient's life. Team leaders are in charge of keeping an eye on all patient alarms and directing the group in how to react to various alerts. Additionally, they enable less seasoned nurses to get important experience responding to alarms, which improves their professional competency and guarantees that the team as a whole upholds patient safety. There are two sub-themes within this theme: Maintaining the key to life and proving the value of nursing, as well as (1) teamwork in crucial monitoring and knowledge transmission (Lu et al., 2024)

1.7 Ensuring Effective Communication

A crucial element of safe care transitions is effective communication with patients and their families. A study of the literature is timely because of the growing emphasis on person-centered care over the past ten years, which has raised awareness of the roles that consumers and healthcare professionals play in the delivery and communication of healthcare. Health professionals may maximize their efforts to support patient safety by learning more about how to better involve patients and families throughout care transitions (Lu et al., 2024).

Communication and collaboration among doctors and nurses are vital in designing an effective healthcare plan for patients. However, inadequate and inappropriate collaboration and support, such as conflicting opinions, disagreements, and insufficient cooperation between them, can lead to various difficulties that may result in poor patient care. Good communication between nurses and physicians and consideration of nurses' opinions were found to enhance the quality of critical care nursing. Furthermore, educating critical care nurses about communication and collaboration skills was reported as crucial for improving the quality of critical care

nursing (Rubbai et al., 2024).

3. Conclusion

This analysis concludes by emphasizing the vital role that nurses play in critical care, as well as the field's changing nature, impact on patient outcomes, and variety of duties. The difficulties critical care nurses encounter call for ongoing education, strong communication abilities, and a dedication to moral behavior. Critical care nurses are essential in utilizing these advancements for better patient care as technology continues to change the healthcare industry. The review's conclusion highlights the continuous dedication to improving the caliber and efficacy of critical care by describing possible directions for further critical care nursing research. The studies that were chosen included a variety of empowerment-focused nursing interventions during intensive care unit discharge, such as information gathering, assessment and nursing care plan development, follow-up by advanced practice nurses, and determining the discharge needs and outcomes of critically ill patients.

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