The Experience of Intensive Care Nurses Caring for Intubated Patients With Delirium

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Purpose:
Delirium affects between 30% to 80% of patients globally (Salluh et al, 2015; Limpawattana et al, 2016). It predicts an increased length of stay in the intensive care unit and hospital, increased cost of care and increased rates of dying (Salluh et al, 2015). It also leads to increase in nurses’ workload, making them stressed, frustrated, exhausted and uncertain about decision making (Yue et al, 2015; LeBlanc, Bourbonnais & Harrison 2018). Little is known about how nurses care for patients with delirium in Africa. Hence, the purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to explore and describe the experience of intensive care nurses caring for intubated patients with delirium in the intensive care units of an academic hospital in Johannesburg.

Methods:
A descriptive qualitative design was used in this study. A purposive sampling method was used to choose the sample of 10 (n=10) registered intensive care nurses who had over two years of experience in the adult general intensive care unit, out of a population of 23 (N=23) registered intensive care nurses practicing in the same intensive care unit. In depth interviews were used to collect data until saturation was reached. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic data analysis approach was used to analyse the transcribed audio-taped information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Trustworthiness was ensured by following the criterion of Lincoln and Guba (1985), which includes “credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

Results:
Four major themes emerged from this study. These included it’s exhausting, finding a way to care, factors that facilitate care and so, what makes caring difficult? Participants described their experience of caring for patients with delirium as exhausting because of the frustrations, challenges and difficulty they encountered in the process of caring for them.

Despite the challenges and exhaustion encountered, participants described how they cared for intubated patients with delirium in the intensive care unit by ensuring their safety, finding ways to maintain communication, providing comfort, using their knowledge and experience as support and involving patients’ families in care. They
further described how they sacrificed caring activities because of delirium, as they must focus on calming the patient with delirium who is agitated, confused and disoriented.

**Conclusion:**
The findings of this study revealed a better understanding of how intensive care nurses cared for patients with delirium in the intensive care unit despite the exhaustion, difficulty, challenges and frustration they encountered, that may lead to missed opportunities to provide care. These findings also helped to create awareness of the factors that help or impede intensive care nurses caring for patients with delirium in the complex and complicated environment of the intensive care unit. This will help in the development of appropriate nursing interventions for critically ill patients with delirium, improve practice, research and education of intensive care nurses.

**Title:**
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**Keywords:**
Caring, Delirium and Intensive care nurses

**Abstract Summary:**
Globally, delirium affects about 80% of critically ill patients. Little is known about how nurses care for patients with delirium in Africa. Hence this study obtained a better understanding of nurses’ experiences of caring for intubated patients with delirium and created awareness of the factors that help or impede their care.

**References:**


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