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Nurses Experiences of End-of-Life Care in the Intensive Care Unit: A Meta-Synthesis of Qualitative Studies

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Purpose:

To explore the experiences of nurses in the provision of end-of-life care for patients and families in the intensive care unit by gathering and synthesizing qualitative studies

Methods:

A meta-synthesis of qualitative research studies was conducted and followed the Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) guidelines for synthesizing qualitative studies. A comprehensive literature search was performed using six computerized databases to locate both empirical and grey literature published in English from January 2007 to June 2018. All studies that included the terms nurses, end-of-life care, experiences, and intensive care unit, in their title and / or abstract were considered eligible for inclusion. Studies conducted outside the paediatric ICU, acute wards, reviews and case reports were excluded.

A total of 1078 papers were screened with 86 read in-depth and 32 selected for this review based on the eligibility criteria. Quality of the selected studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme 2018 version. Data extraction was conducted using the De Souza et al., (2010) data extraction tool. A thematic synthesis approach informed by Thomas and Helen (2008) was used.

Results:

A total of thirty-two qualitative studies were included in the metasynthesis. Several key features emerged consistently across the studies reviewed, which lead to construction of the following overarching themes: *Supporting patients; Supporting the family; Facing emotional challenges; Negotiating conflicts and uncertainties ; Commitment to caring ; Developing coping strategies; challenges in providing end-of-life care; and Facilitators to providing quality end-of-life care.*

Conclusion:

The provision of end-of-life care for patients and their families remain an integral part of intensive care nursing. Nurses play vital roles in supporting both the patient and family. Although challenging and stressful, several coping strategies are employed to maintain their professional demeanour. Research evidence suggests effective communication and collaboration among the intensive care team, patients and their families are necessary to effect changes in the current state of EOL care in the ICU. The multidisciplinary team should also provide support for nurses during the provision of end-of-life care

Title:

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Keywords:

Nurses, end-of-life care and experiences

Abstract Summary:

The intensive care setting is best designed to save lives with no place for comfort and end-of-life care. Nursing patients at the end-of-life and their families aided by sophisticated technology and intensive care in such a busy environment can be demanding, stressful and challenging.

References:

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