Nurses’ Attitudes to working with older persons in acute care

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My story...

- Ethics approval granted in 2009
- Ethnographic study
- Purposive sampling – Graduate Nurse Year participants and nurses with > 4 years experience
- Two stakeholders – EDON and Bureaucrat
- N=15
- Four follow-up interviews
Research Question/s

- What are the attitudes of experienced nurses toward caring for older persons in an acute setting?
- Can an understanding of the impact of immersion in practice on attitude inform an education model focused on improving care of older persons (in acute care)?
- Does immersion in practice impact attitudes to working with older people?
Methodology

- Socially constructed
- Ethnographic approach
- Semi-structured individual interview
- Thematic analysis
- Coding of themes to saturation
I see a physical and psychological element to it. Some people age psychologically faster than others. There's a bit in there about whether people are independent or dependent. There's a bit in there about agility and physical cope-ability. (A011)
frail and in poor health. That would be my interpretation of old. So not necessarily old in number but old in body, worn out, organ failure, unwell perhaps. (A005)
...it’s taken me thirty years to feel confident. Older patients are much more complex than younger patients; you tend to focus on the high functional demands of these patients [older patients]. (A003)
Role modelling

I still remember my first clinical teacher...who was very passionate about assisting older people...she had a very positive attitude towards older people and it rubbed off. ...I would say that a lot of my focus has been shaped by experts in the field that influenced me when I was a new nurse. (A009)
Findings

Three emergent themes:
Dependence – frailty / functionality
Relationality
Role-modelling
Opportunities for reflection at:
- Debriefing
- Clinical Handover
- Clinical supervision
- Patient engagement – nursing practice

*Improving Care of older persons – Achieving Relational Reflection (Mahoney 2012)*
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