

# Correctional Nursing: Described From the Perspective of Nurses Working in a Maximum Security Correctional Hospital



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## BACKGROUND

- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013) approximately 6,899,000 offenders were being supervised in state and federal prisons.
- August 2012, the state of Texas revealed it has 112 prison facilities with a population of 671,886 cases under supervision.
- Incarcerated persons are diagnosed with many health, mental health, and substance abuse complications requiring inpatient acute medical care. As a result many nurses work in correctional facilities across the nation. These nurses who work in correctional facilities experience added complex challenges. Challenges include to caring for patients with complex medical conditions secondary to multiple diagnoses, having to contend with necessary security measures in addition to providing quality care to patients assigned.
- American Nurses Association scope and standards of practice identifies the principles of correctional nursing to include providing quality patient care with empathy and professionalism, treating patients with dignity, and maintaining confidentiality (2007).
- The role of the correctional nurse is not clearly understood.
- A paucity of research was found related to the role or experiences of correctional care nurses who work in a maximum security correctional acute care hospital.

## PURPOSE

- The purpose of this study is to describe experiences of correctional nurses who work in a maximum security correctional hospital.
- The question that guides this study is: “What are the experiences of nurses who work in a maximum security correctional hospital”.

## LIMITATIONS

- Interviews done by director of nursing and participants may not have been as direct if done by another researcher
- Small sample size – but using snowball sampling strengthened design because all participants had rich information to share.

## METHODS

- Qualitative descriptive phenomenology to explore experiences of individuals
- Snowball sampling design to identify nurses who work in a maximum security acute care hospital
- Colaizzi’s (1978) psychological stages of analysis to illuminate meaning, structure and essence
- Rigor was based on Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for trustworthiness.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Inform future research studies,
- Inform the development of future policies
- Address nurse’s needs and increase nurse satisfaction
- Inform staffing guidelines within correctional nursing facilities
- May be used to develop recruitment strategies

## RESULTS

Correctional nursing has inconveniences but for the most part nurses report working in a positive environment where people care about each other and foster teamwork. Areas of improvement include a need for more in-depth education to prepare staff for specific protocols that arise. The project is ongoing and there remains a vast amount of information to be identified and understood.

### PRIMARY & SUB THEMES

- Theme 1: Teamwork to great care
  - a. All staff take care of each other
  - b. Working together
  - c. Collaborating
- Theme 2: Positive Environment
  - a. Lack of negativity
  - b. Supportive leadership
  - c. Taking care of one another
- Theme 3: Dealing with Inconveniences
  - a. Have to arrive early
  - b. Going through security
  - c. Lack of consistency
  - d. Waiting to get into rooms
- Theme 4: Being prepared to work in a prison environment
  - a. Lacking education

### ESSENTIAL SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS

#### Teamwork to great care

- Amber: Everybody pitches in
- Brenda: We go in and asses our patient needs ... collaborate with nurses, physical therapist, occupational therapist, physicians ...
- Carrie: There is a lot of teamwork. ...everybody just checking on everybody

#### Positive Environment

- Amber: I think it is a happy place to work...the best place to work
- Brenda: doctors and nurses look out for them (patients) and their comfort and make the best situation possible...
- Carrie: The mood on the unit is jovial and calm
- Pixie: If you smile at people, chit chat a little bit ... you have smooth sailing all through the shift

#### Dealing with Inconveniences

- Brenda: It is different than working in the free world ... you may have to be there 10-15 minutes getting searched.
- Pixie: When you go through security...you have to take off your jacket, everything out of your pockets, take off your shoes ... really depends on the officer
- Pixie: One time I had to wait 3 hours to get into a room because the 2 officers had one had to watch everyone in the gym and the other one had to walk in hallway with the therapy people.

#### Being prepared to work in a prison environment

- Carrie: We sat through security awareness ... an hour long
- Amber: I think the live security awareness should be given in nursing orientation ...
- Pixie: ... it would be helpful to understand if you have a patient on suicide watch/precaution ... how is that supposed to look