Experiences of Significant others of ICU patients with Severe Burns: A Literature Review

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BACKGROUND
Patients with severe burn injury who require ICU admission have high mortality rates associated with complications such as sepsis, shock, and multi-organ failure (MOF) (Bloemsma, Dokter, Boxma, & Oen, 2008; Metaxa & Lavrentieva, 2015). Due to the sudden and unexpected nature of the trauma, significant others of patients with severe burns are unprepared (Metaxa & Lavrentieva, 2015) and are both formally and informally called upon to advocate the patient's wishes, make decisions on the patient's behalf and provide psychological support for the patient.

AIM
The aim of this literature review was to critically examine research related to significant others’ experiences of ICU patients with severe burns.

METHODS
Search Strategy:
- Peer-reviewed papers in the English language published prior to November 2017.
- No date range was applied.
- Search terms used were burns AND family OR family relations, siblings OR sibling relations, spouses OR significant other, caregivers OR caregiver burden. Databases searched included CINAHL, PubMed, Medline, Scopus and Google Scholar and a manual review reference lists.

Exclusion Criteria:
- Paediatrics and medical aspects of burn injury, such as complications.
- Research that involved patients with a minor burn injury, who did not require ICU admission.

RESULTS
12 papers were included in the final review. 6 of these studies were conducted in America, 2 in Australia, 2 in Sweden, 1 in Canada and 1 in Norway. Three major themes were identified below:

Communication with family
- Family/significant other advocate to ensure patient's values are respected and presented in decision making.
- The difficulties in communication for the significant other include trauma impacting on memory which delays decisions, and increased risk of anxiety, depression, PTSD.

REFERENCES