

Abstract

Original Article

Intensive Care Unit Experience of Nursing Students during their Clinical Placements: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background: It has been strengthened that nursing students benefit from ICU placements by practicing their patient care skills, widen their knowledge by observing complex treatments and care activities. Besides these positive outcomes it is also being emphasized that ICU environment is a complex environment for students which may trigger their stress during clinical placements. There are very few studies related to nursing students' perceptions about ICU placements.

Objective and aims: The aim of this qualitative study is to determine the effects of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) experience on nursing students' learning.

Methodology: This study was conducted with 18 students from February to May 2011 in ICU units of a University Hospital. Data were collected by using a semi structured interview form. Each interview took about 40-50 minutes and answers given by students were recorded by researchers.

Results: Data were interpreted by researchers independently and 4 themes emerged and were named as "Perceptions about ICU environment and patients", "Thoughts about being an ICU nurse", "Comprehension of communication and empathy with ICU patient" and "Contribution of patient caring activities in learning".

Conclusion: Personal experiences and perceptions of the nursing students play an important role in forming their thoughts related to ICU. ICU environment is a place where nursing students experience different procedures and caring activities and get involved in analyzing complex health conditions. For the students who are at their beginning of their nursing education ICU's are quite stressful places to practice nursing skills. Considering nursing students' limited autonomy at ICU's comparing to clinical wards we recommend the use of the intensive care unit as a part of clinical education for nursing students who are close to their graduation such as intern students.

Key words: ICU experience, nursing student, clinical education