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Intensive care unit nurse's perceptions of obstacles to the provision of end-of-life care in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: A mixed methods study

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Many patients die in intensive care units within an intense medical treatment environment and this situation can affect the quality of end-of-life care. Studies have reported that nurses may feel a sense of failure when their patient is dying and can find the provision of end-of-life care emotionally difficult. Very little is known about this phenomenon in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where multiple cultural influences may further influence end-of-life care provision. The aim of this study was to explore nurse's perceptions of obstacles to the provision of end-of-life care in intensive care units in Saudi Arabia. A sequential explanatory mixed method design was used. This method included two phases: Questionnaires and Interviews. For phase one, a questionnaire developed by Beckstrand and Kirchhoff (2005) was used. The interviews were conducted with four ICU charge nurses. The two phases were conducted in a major specialist hospital in 2015 at Saudi Arabia. The phase one findings highlighted concerns with patient's family, physicians who differed in opinions, cultural differences and how language barriers affect communication. The nurses also suggested avoiding unnecessary care, the need for end-of-life care awareness; education and preparation were also issues. The phase two findings indicated concerns when family members did not understand the patient's situations, lack of family support, cultural differences and language barriers. The nurses suggested the need for end-of-life care awareness for nurses and increased involvement of nurses in decision-making. The conclusion of this study shows a number of obstacles to the provision of end-of-life care in intensive care units, which may affect nurse's ability to maintain quality end-of-life care. Therefore, the further development of both end-of-life care guidelines and nursing education about end-of-life care in intensive care units in Saudi Arabia is recommended.

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