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Using institutional ethnography to explore how registered and practical nurses work together

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Patients' needs are becoming more complicated and all healthcare professionals must respond to new challenges in their workplaces, such as increased patient acuity and the use of complex technologies. To meet these challenges, many 'experts' recommend nurses and other healthcare professionals that they must engage in 'collaborative' patient care; and 'collaboration' is frequently presented as a critical concept in nursing. In Canada, two groups of differently credentialed nurses, registered and practical nurses, work closely together to provide care to patients in many different healthcare settings. There is, however, little published research about the actual 'collaborative' work that exists between these two groups of differently credentialed nurses. For my doctoral research, I will use institutional ethnography, a research approach developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith, to explore registered and practical actual experiences of providing patient care side by side. I will explain my research methodology and how I plan to use the data collection methods associated with institutional ethnography, including observation, interviewing, and textual analysis, to find out what is actually happening and how what is happening is being socially organized.

Biography

Sarah Balcom currently enrolled in the University of New Brunswick's for PhD in Interdisciplinary studies program. She is an Associate Professor in Cape Breton University's School of Professional Studies. She has certifications in both Intensive Care and Cardiac Nursing.

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