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How do knowledge and understanding of sleep deprivation influence clinical decision making of intensive care nurses when managing sleep in critically ill patients?

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Sleep deprivation holds many consequences for critically ill patients including slower recovery, decreased resistance to infection and neurological problems such as delirium (Dick-Smith 2017, Tembo and Parker 2009). Nesbitt and Goode (2014) argued that nurses sometimes lack complex understanding of the importance of sleep and the interventions required to promote it. A shift in nursing and institutional culture is required to apply sleep promotion strategies and research, and to minimise unpleasant outcomes for patients (Dick-Smith 2017). This paper will present the quantitative results of this two phased Constructivist Grounded Theory study focusing on what has been learnt about nurses' decision making and how this can influence the quality of sleep their patients achieve in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Data was collected from 19 nurses through an online survey. All grades of nursing staff (Bands 5-7) described using research to guide their decision making and this appears to have been particularly important for Band 5 respondents, who also reported following unwritten rules when looking for strategies to help them make decisions about their patient's sleep problems. This was found to be highly significant. 15 respondents (78.9%) knew there was a sleep protocol and all respondents felt supported in making decisions about promoting sleep for their patients. The qualities that the nurses in the sample would look for in a fellow nurse to help them make decisions included someone that was knowledgeable, was trustworthy, had credibility and provided holistic care. Limitations of the study included the small sample. Recommendations are made for how improved sleep for patients in ICU is possible by focusing on, and exploring, nurses' decision making. Unanswered questions will now be followed up with phase 2 of the study and the qualitative semi structured interviews.

References

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Biography

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