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Noise in South Korea intensive care units: Causes and patients' responses

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to measure noise levels in South Korea intensive care units (ICUs) and to analyze the causes of noise and responses of the patients.

Methods: Noise levels were recorded in adult ICUs for 24 h over a week from the patients' bedside with a sound level meter. Noise sources were categorized into three groups: Medical machines, health care providers, and the environment. Noises from the environment were recorded in an empty ICU side room. Responses to the noise of 125 patients admitted to ICUs were recorded using a questionnaire.

Results: The mean level of noise in ICUs was 58.5 dBA (range, 34.2–80.2). The causes of noise higher than 70 dBA were nebulizers and infusion/syringe pumps among medical machines, and drawer slamming, phone ringing, and stripping packages of medical fluids among environmental noises. According to the questionnaire, 64% of the patients responded that the ICU was noisy and that they suffered from sleep disturbance due to noise.

Conclusion: Noise is considerably high in South Korea ICUs and is an annoying factor for the patients. Most noise sources are adjustable, and we should try to reduce their contributions to make the ICU environment more pleasant.

Biography

Minyoung Kim has completed her PhD from Keimyung University School of Nursing and is an Assistant Professor at Ulsan University School of Nursing. She is the Adult Health advanced practice nurse of Keimyung University hospital for 10 years. She has published 6 papers in reputed journals.

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