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Emergency nurses' experiences regarding the transfer of critically ill patients from the Emergency Department (ED) to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

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The literature reviewed highlighted that any transfer of the critically ill patient puts them at increased risk of significant mortality. Patient transfers often form one part of a patient's experience during a hospital admission, whether it is a transfer from the ED to an inpatient bed, the X-ray department or to ICU. ED nurses, in everyday clinical practice, deal with the transfer of critically ill patients and participate in every part of the transfer process. Although there are international and national guidelines available on intra-hospital transfers, it is acknowledged that there are hospitals where these guidelines are not used and transfer policies are not developed. However, ED nurses have a professional responsibility to a patient requiring transfer and those undertaking patient transfers should be appropriately qualified, experienced and trained. The need for standards and training in patient transfers has been emphasised but ED nursing staff involved in patient transfers are often not trained or experienced. It was the aim of the researcher to explore emergency nurses' experiences regarding the intra-hospital transfer of critically ill patients from the ED to ICU, with the hope of identifying ways in which the current process may be enhanced. A qualitative descriptive design was used which involved semi-structured individual interviews. Participants were selected from the ED of an acute teaching hospital in the Republic of Ireland. A total of 10 respondents were chosen for the interviews which were audio recorded and transcribed *verbatim*. The data was analysed using thematic analysis and findings were discussed with reference to existing literature and the objectives of the study.

Qualitative analysis of the data showed that there is no structured approach to patient transfers. The findings indicate that ED nurses' experiences of patient transfers were mainly negative. However, a lack of formal training and education could be attributed to this. ED nurses are regularly faced with the transfer of the critically ill patient from the ED to ICU. This study aims to contribute to the quality of patient transfers and make recommendations for the enhancement of this process, in the research study site.

Biography

Catherine Connolly is currently working as a Clinical Nurse Manager 1 in the Emergency Department in St. James's Hospital, Dublin, Ireland. She is passionate about critical care, trauma and improving emergency nursing. Her study has the potential to create a new pathway for improving all critical care patient transfers.

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