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Blood sampling through peripheral intravenous cannulas: A look at current practice in Australia

Patients are often subjected to numerous blood samples to diagnosis conditions and monitor response to treatment. Blood samples are traditionally drawn from peripheral venepuncture, a painful technique that can cause bruising, haematomas, infections, vasovagal reactions and peripheral nerve injury. Increasingly intravenous cannulas are being used for blood sampling. Arguments for obtaining blood samples from intravenous cannula include decreased pain, convenience and appropriateness for certain populations, such as children, patients with blood disorders or requiring frequent samples. Arguments against the practice suggest risk to infection control, patency of cannula and blood vessel and quality of blood samples. There is a paucity of evidence on which to base policies for or against blood sampling from intravenous cannula. This study aimed to explore the prevalence of the practice of blood sampling from intravenous cannulas in Australia. Using a cross-sectional design, participants were recruited through an anonymous survey distributed electronically by nursing organizations and snowballing. Five-hundred and forty-two nurses participated in the survey, with 409 providing usable responses. The practice was reported by 94% (n=388) of participants, with 57% (n=235) only taking blood from newly inserted cannulas. Reasons for use included difficult venepuncture (n=270, 66%), patient comfort (n=228, 56%) and frequency of sampling (n=210, 51%). Use was state dependent and differed between specialty areas. There is a large variance in practice regarding obtaining blood samples from intravenous samples between states in Australia, types of clinical practice and individual nurses.

Biography

Elisabeth Jacob is currently working as an Associate Dean (Nursing) at ECU. She practiced as a registered nurse for over 20 years in both rural and metropolitan hospitals. She has completed her PhD at Monash University in 2014. She has published more than 30 papers in reputed journals. Her research interests include: development of the nursing workforce; skill mix and its effect on patient outcomes; critical thinking and patient outcomes; acute nursing and mixed methods research.

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