B1-18: Critical Care Nurses' Perceptions and Knowledge of Patient Confidentiality

Author List:
Presenting Author: Angela B. Newman
Additional Author:

Presenting Author: Angela B Newman

Address: 506 Caswell Kern Rd
Kernersville, North Carolina 27284
United States
Ph: 336-992-2676
Fax:
Email: anewman1@triad.rr.com
Institution: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Abstract:
Introduction: Critical care nurses are required to implement confidentiality legislation as well as reconcile application of the law with ethical principles and obligations as they pertain to individual clinical situations. The perceptions that critical care nurses express regarding patient confidentiality may yield insight to what information this population of nurses’ value as protected health information, their knowledge of confidentiality law and bio-ethics and what information they communicate with patient’s family members and others visitors. This study seeks to explore the critical care nurses’ application of their knowledge of confidentiality legislation and their values into their practice.

Method(s): Twelve critical care nurses from the triad region of North Carolina were presented with two structured scenarios that asked the participants their feelings and probable actions related to the scenarios during one-on-one interviews for this qualitative study. Participants were recruited via snowballing until redundancy of information was achieved. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, with-in case and cross-case, providing a clear and concise audit trail.

Results: Critical care nurse’s related to the patient’s right to privacy and autonomy while appreciating the family’s need for information and involvement in patient care. They expressed concern for breach in confidentiality and discomfort and reluctance to share information with individuals who knowingly post confidential information on the internet but admitted to no control of how information is used when shared with family in any situation.

Discussion & Conclusions: Critical care nurses employ their knowledge and values regarding confidentiality in the interaction and communication with their patients, family members and
visitors. The nurses in this study expressed concern regarding the communication they should provide and the information they desired to provide to patient families and significant others. Understanding the critical care nurse’s perception and knowledge may lead to adjustments in decision making regarding the protection of health information. Re-examination of health care policy at all levels may be better operationalized for nurses in the critical care field of practice.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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**Submitted by:**
anewman1@tridad.rr.com