No Visitors: Mental Health Impacts of Separation from Hospitalized Loved Ones

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Background/Introduction

Restrictions on visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic had major implications for patients and families, impacting health care outcomes. Eden, et al., (2021) found emotional anguish for family members who were not allowed to physically visit their loved ones or received limited information on the patient's status. The lack of visitation added to the impact of the pandemic on the mental and social health of society.

Methods

Individuals who experienced separation from hospitalized family members due to the "no visitor policies" during the COVID-19 pandemic were asked to participate in a qualitive study to elicit their perceptions. Participants were recruited using social media, the Sigma platform, and through personal contacts and referrals. Audiotaped and transcribed interviews were conducted in person, via telephone, or virtually using a Primary Investigator (PI) developed interview guide. Using the Colaizzi method of analysis, themes were derived.

Results

Interviews were completed for those who had loved ones admitted to acute care facilities only. Of the eleven completed interviews, one hundred percent of participants were female, and all were residents of Texas. Themes derived from this pilot project were of advocacy, communication, emotional upheaval, isolation and abandonment.

Discussion/Conclusions

Findings from patient interviews support previous published studies. "Patients, families and healthcare professionals were impacted by restrictive visitation policies in acute care settings during COVID-19" (Moss, et al., 2021) and severe mental health problems for those who have experienced quarantine and isolation were identified (Hossain, et al., 2020). Ideas for improved patient and family experience discussed by the authors.

Biography:

Stacey Knight is an Associate Professor at the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing in Beaumont, TX, USA. She has a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from Loyola University with focus on Executive Leadership, is a Certified Nurse Educator (CNE), and former Robert Wood Johnson DNP mentor. Her interests include cultural awareness, global health, and comparative health care studies. Realizing the importance of increasing cultural awareness and knowledge of global health initiatives, she developed and led faculty for student focused culturally immersive study abroad experiences and has partnered with universities internationally studying the differences in healthcare systems.

JT Seaman is a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner with experience in inpatient and outpatient mental health. He is also an experienced educator who has taught in undergraduate and graduate mental health programs. He holds a Doctor of Nursing from Vanderbilt University and maintains two certifications in mental health. JT's research interest includes childhood trauma, the personality types of university faculty, and immersive learning.

Judson LaGrone is an experienced emergency and certified cardiac/electrophysiology nurse, educator, and leader. He recently graduated from the University of Texas Medical Branch nursing Ph.D. program and is an Assistant Professor at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, USA. He actively teaches and mentors students in leading and managing, evidence-based practice, integration to professional practice, and research courses. Judson's research background focuses on self-identified traumatic events among critical care nurses and the effects of the work culture.