

Exploration of Critical Care Nurses' Challenges in Caring for Enterocutaneous Fistula as a Complication for an Open Abdomen: A Qualitative Study



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Enterocutaneous fistula is a severe complication of an open abdomen, which poses devastating challenges for critical care nurses. The study aimed to explore and describe the challenges faced by critical care nurses caring for patients with enterocutaneous fistulas in a tertiary public hospital in Gauteng, South Africa. A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, and contextual design was conducted to understand the challenges experienced by the critical care nurses caring for patients with enterocutaneous fistulas. The standards for reporting qualitative research checklists are utilized. The study conducted four semi-structured focus group interviews with six members in each group. Critical care nurses revealed two overarching themes: the challenges regarding difficult nursing care and the lack of resources to provide quality patient care. Care of patients with ECF highlighted that nurses were not coping with the care of such patients. Collaboration of a multi-disciplinary team involving dietitians, surgeons, and enterostomal therapy nurses could improve the management of ECF without surgical intervention, increase the knowledge and skills of nurses, alleviate their challenges, and yield safe patient outcomes. Standardized and updated protocols will ensure the best practices towards quality patient care that facilitate healing, closure, and reducing mortality and morbidity rates. The key principles for caring for patients with open abdomen, presenting with enterocutaneous fistulas, are based on correcting fluids and electrolytes, nutritional optimization and support, control of abdominal sepsis, wound care management, pain control, and emotional support to critical care nurses and ward nurses.

Biography:

Dr. Mpho Chipu is a nursing lecturer at the University of Free State. She teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students. Her PhD study was about a model to facilitate self-care of professional nurses caring for critically ill patients. She has a passion in working in the critical care units. She focuses on the health and well-being of critical care nurses and has expertise in managing ICU patients. She has published national and international articles.