

Lived experience of caring for dying patients in emergency room

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Background: Dying often occurs in hospitals and frequently in emergency rooms. Understanding caring for critical and dying patients is necessary for quality nursing.

Purpose: This study described the meaning of nurses' lived experience of caring for critical and dying patients in the emergency rooms.

Methods: This study was conducted in three emergency rooms of tertiary hospitals in southern Thailand. Twelve nurses met the inclusion criteria: nurses working in emergency room for at least 2 years, and experienced caring for critical and dying patients in an emergency department. Data were collected using in-depth individual interviews. Data transcription and analysis used van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Trustworthiness was established following Lincoln and Guba's criteria.

Findings: Experiences of caring for critical and dying patients revealed four thematic categories: defying death; no time for palliative care; lacking support for family; and privacy for peaceful deaths. These thematic categories reflected van Manen's four lived worlds of body, time, relations and space.

Conclusions: The study described the meaning of the experience of caring for critical and dying patients while supporting the development of nursing knowledge for palliative and end-of-life care in emergent settings.

Implications for nursing policy: Findings of the study influence nursing policies toward enhancing education of nurses regarding palliative and end-of-life care in emergency settings. These findings can also influence the value of caring-healing environments for critical and dying patients and their families. Policies can focus on practice and education of families particularly about end-of-life care for critical and dying patients.

Keywords: Caring, Nursing, Emergency Room, Palliative Care, Death, Dying, Phenomenology

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Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.