



## Thai nursing students' experiences when attending real life situations involving cardiac life support: A Phenomenological study



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### ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*  
Accepted 16 May 2015

*Keywords:*  
Cardiac life support  
Nursing students' experience  
Phenomenological study  
Clinical teaching

### SUMMARY

*Background:* During the last few years, manikin simulations have been used for cardiac life support training procedures in medical and nursing education. However, some nursing students have experienced attending real events involving cardiac life support during their clinical practice.

*Objective:* This study aims to describe the meaning of experience of Thai nursing students when attending real situations of cardiac life support.

*Methods:* A hermeneutic phenomenological study was used. Third and fourth year bachelor of nursing students at a university in the southern region of Thailand who had the experience of attending real situation of cardiac life support were purposely selected as the informants. The data were generated from individual in-depth interviews with eighteen nursing students. Van Manen's approach was used to analyze the data. Trustworthiness was established using the criteria set out by Lincoln and Guba.

*Results:* Essential themes situated in the context of the four existential grounds of body, time, space, and relation emerged. These were: being worried and fearful while desiring to participate in cardiac life support procedures; enhancing self value; knowing each moment is meaningful for one's life; having time to understand the reality of life; being in a small corner; appreciating such opportunities and the encouragement given by nurses and the healthcare team; and feeling empathy.

*Conclusions:* Besides learning in classrooms and practicing in labs, experiencing real situations is beneficial for nursing students in learning cardiac life support. This study provides information that can be used for clinical teaching management in the topics relating to cardiac life support.

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### Introduction

Cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in critical situations around the world. The Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) course is one dealing with the treatment of cardiac emergencies. The ACLS was created by the American Heart Association and is used in many countries to train medical and nursing staff to improve and ensure rapid survival after cardiac arrest (Field et al., 2010). Evidence shows that effective ACLS can save lives. In hospitals, the mortality and morbidity rates of cardiac arrest victims are directly affected by the ability of healthcare providers in using ACLS knowledge and skills effectively. ACLS competency has been defined as encompassing both the acquisition and retention of ACLS cognitive knowledge and psychomotor skills (Yang et al., 2012). ACLS training is important for healthcare professionals and health science students, especially medical and nursing students.

Through the nursing curriculum of the Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University (Faculty of Nursing, 2011), nursing students learned about cardiac life support. This program started with Basic Life Support (BLS), which is a core skill in which all healthcare professionals should be proficient. Lectures were also delivered in relation to BLS that demonstrated its importance and when and how it is performed. Individuals practiced BLS through simulation using manikins and this was undertaken in nursing laboratories. This started with assessment, asking for help, performing chest compression, and using a self inflating bag with a mask to help breathing. ACLS was taught in a later course after the BLS instruction had been given (Faculty of Nursing, 2011). These nursing students learned the principles of ACLS through course work. This included its importance, the way ACLS is performed, and the equipment and medication used in ACLS. A video of an ACLS situation taking place in clinics was provided for viewing. Nursing instructors explained and discussed the details of the ACLS procedures in the video. The nursing students were then assigned to groups of 10–12 persons. Each group was instructed about the way to practice simulated ACLS procedures using manikins in the laboratories. These procedures included assessment, EKG

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