

Lived experiences of surviving in-hospital cardiac arrest

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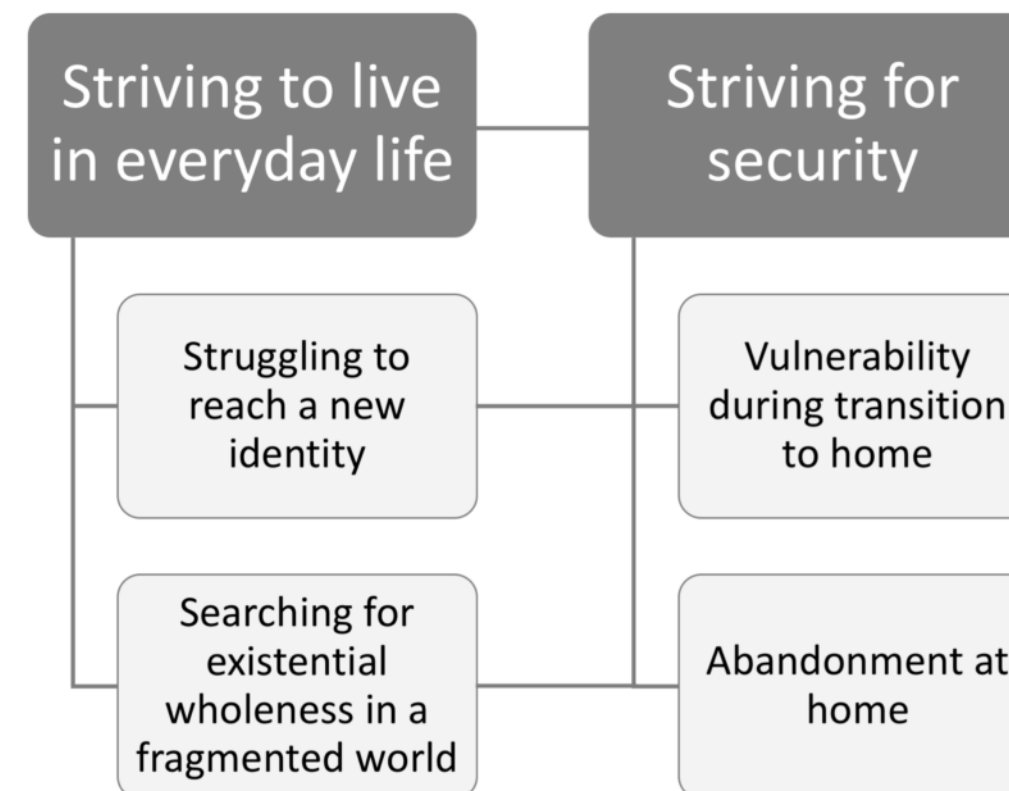
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Purpose

Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survivors experience psychological distress, existential insecurity and vulnerability. However, research highlighting experiences of in-hospital cardiac arrest survivors are lacking. This means that evidence for post-resuscitation care has largely been extrapolated from studies on out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survivors, without considering potential group differences. The purpose was to illuminate meanings of people's lived experiences of surviving an in-hospital cardiac arrest.

Materials and methods

This was an explorative, phenomenological hermeneutic study to illuminate meanings of lived experiences. Participants were identified through the Swedish national register of cardiopulmonary resuscitation and recruited from two hospitals. A purposive sample of eight participants, 53 to 99 years old, who survived an in-hospital cardiac arrest 1-3 years earlier, was interviewed in 2016. Data was analyzed with the methodological steps of naïve understanding, structural analysis, and comprehensive understanding.



Results

The survivors were striving to live in everyday life and striving for security. The struggle to reach a new identity meant an existence between restlessness and a peace of mind, searching for emotional well-being and bodily abilities. The search for existential wholeness meant a quest for understanding and explanation of the fragmented cardiac arrest event and its existential consequences. The transition from hospital to home meant a transition from care and protection to uncertainty and vulnerability with feelings of abandonment, which called for a search for security and belonging, away from isolation and loneliness.

Conclusions

Surviving an in-hospital cardiac arrest can be understood by means of the concept of hospital-to-home-transition. Following hospital discharge, patients felt vulnerable and abandoned when pending between denial and acceptance of the "new" life. Hence, the healthcare system should play a significant role when it comes to facilitate cardiac arrest survivors' security during hospital-to-home-transition.



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