WITNESSING CPR OF A FELLOW PATIENT IN HOSPITAL: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING PATIENTS' EXPERIENCES

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BACKGROUND AND AIM

Witnessing CPR in or out hospital is a stressful experience for bystanders. Substantial improvements have been made in supporting family presence during hospital CPR. However, the perspectives of fellow patients on witnessed CPR in hospital are still relatively unknown.

The aim of this study is to explore the lived-experience of hospital patients who witness CPR on another patient.

METHODS

We designed an exploratory qualitative study with a phenomenological approach. We conducted individual face-to-face interviews with N=17 hospital patients who witnessed CPR on another patient in the same multi-bed room, within one week after CPR. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and managed into NVivo 12 and subject to descriptive phenomenological analysis.

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CONCLUSIONS

This study provides new insight on the experience of patients who witness CPR in hospital. Witnessing CPR in hospital can be traumatic for patients. Healthcare professionals should acknowledge the presence of patients witnessing CPR and enhance the practice of patient debriefing after CPR to help them feel considered, reassured and supported.

FINDINGS

Four themes were developed from the analysis of the interviews, providing a rich understanding of patients' witnessing experience.

- Patients are aware of the reality of hospital and accept that cardiac arrests and CPR are an element of their hospital experience.
- Witnessing CPR of a fellow patient is a negative experience, having an emotional impact on patients, who react with different coping strategies.
- Patients do not feel protected by bed-curtains but feel stuck and exposed to the noise of CPR. In turn, they feel safe when observing staff's prompt response to the emergency.
- Patients need to receive information and reassurance from healthcare professionals after witnessing CPR on another patient to feel supported.

"Sad fact of life, hospitals are where sick people go. Sometimes those sick people get worse and sometimes they die. Hopefully, that won't happen to me. And it won't happen to anybody else in here, but it does happen." (PT04)

"I was in shock! A real shock! [...] obviously I'm aware of CPR and things like that, but just shock really to think one minute she's talking and the next minute she's gone." (PT14)

Understanding the reality of hospital life

Feeling the impact of witnessing CPR

Feeling stuck and feeling safe: an unintended effect

Receiving support from the staff

"I know there wasn't any other place to go, once they shut the curtains you kind of have to wait, because you don't know what they are trying to stop you to see." (PT07)

"But the raw experience of watching, because there was nothing there, and then all of a sudden all that help and I thought: 'I feel quite safe here.'" (PT16)

"One of them came and could see I was upset and she went: 'are you okay?' and I went: 'I am not', so she stayed with me for some time and she came back the following morning. And I thought: 'oh she's an HCA that cares.'" (PT08)

Figure: The four themes and patients' quotes

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