

Project Title

Enrolled nurses' perceptions of providing nutritional care to elderly hospitalised patients: A descriptive qualitative study.

Project Lead and Members

Project lead: Neo Yi Ling

Project members: Isabella Hong Leting; Dr. Lim Yen Peng; Dr. Chan Ee Yuee

Organisation(s) Involved

Tan Tock Seng Hospital; Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, National University of Singapore

Project Period

Start date: SEP-2017

Completed date: JAN-2018

Aims

To explore enrolled nurses' perceptions of providing nutritional care to elderly hospitalised patient in a local acute care setting.

Background

Malnutrition is a significant problem among elderly hospitalised patients. This problem might intensify with the ageing population, where the number of elderly patients increase. Enrolled nurses are considered the main providers of nutritional care in Singapore, however no previous local study had investigated nurses' perceptions of providing nutritional care to elderly patients. Existing Western studies had targeted mostly on registered nurses and might have limited transferability to local context.

Methods

Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 enrolled nurses in Tan Tock Seng Hospital from September 2017 to January 2018. Content analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection. Recruitment stopped when data saturation was achieved, where no new data emerged from the interviews.

Results

Four main categories: “Enrolled nurses’ critical role in providing nutritional care”, “Perceived enablers in nutritional care”, “Perceived challenges in nutritional care” and “Proposed strategies to improve nutritional care” and 13 subcategories emerged from content analysis of the interviews.

Lessons Learnt

It was not easy to gather enough sample size for the purpose of a research interview and capture the attention of the participants for the entire interview duration, which lasted for at least 38 minutes. It was important to be very proactive and readily available for each potential participant during the project commencement period. Rapport building with the participants was also critical in a qualitative study as such.

Conclusion

Enrolled nurses who perceived their nutritional care roles to be critical were more amenable to improve nutritional care. They could be equipped to take on expanded roles to facilitate in timelier nutritional care and better management of malnutrition among elderly hospitalised patients in local acute care settings. Our study findings also provide useful information for other institutions to review their current nutritional care provision.

Project Category

Research

Keywords

Research, Qualitative Study, Elder Care, Nursing, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, National University of Singapore, Nutritional Care, Malnutrition, Enrolled Nurses, Semi-Structured Interview, Content Analysis

Name and Email of Project Contact Person(s)

Name: Neo Yi Ling

Email: a0129925@u.nus.edu



Tan Tock Seng
HOSPITAL
National Healthcare Group

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Neo, Y. L.^{1,2}, Hong, L. I.¹, Lim, Y. P.¹, Chan, E. Y.^{1,2}

¹Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Singapore, ²Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore



BACKGROUND

Malnutrition is a significant problem among elderly hospitalised patients in both local and global contexts¹⁻⁴. This problem will intensify as the number of elderly hospitalised patients continues to grow with our ageing population⁵. However, no local study has yet to explore nurses' perceptions in providing nutritional care for elderly patients. Enrolled nurses are considered the main providers of nutritional care in Singapore's care settings⁶, but their perceptions were rarely investigated in existing overseas studies.

AIM

To explore enrolled nurses' perceptions of providing nutritional care to elderly hospitalised patients in local acute care setting.

METHODS

Study Design: Descriptive qualitative study

Setting: A local tertiary hospital

Data Collection: Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews using an interview guide were conducted with 15 enrolled nurses from September 2017 to January 2018.

Data Analysis: Content analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection. Recruitment stopped when data saturation was achieved.

Table 1. Interview Guide

No.	Questions
1	What are your roles in providing nutritional care for the elderly?
2	How satisfied are you with the current nutritional care practice?
3	What are some of the challenges you faced when providing nutritional care to elderly patients?
4	How do you think the current nutritional care practices can be improved?

RESULTS

Table 2. Relevant Demographics of Participants

	N (%)
Nursing Training	
Overseas degree of nursing (Philippines)	11 (73.3%)
Years of Experience in TTSH	
< 5 years	11 (73.3%)

Figure 1. Main Categories and Subcategories



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Enrolled nurses took pride in their huge responsibilities in nutritional care and expressed willingness to be trained for greater roles.
- Nursing leaders could equip enrolled nurses to actively report and recommend for nutritional interventions.
- Health institutions should improve taste and appearance of hospital meals and allow greater family involvement during meal times.

Likewise all qualitative studies, our findings might not be universal to all groups of nurses due to the use of a small purposive sample. However, our study acts as an exploratory study for local researchers to continue investigating nutritional care and management of elderly malnutrition.

Enrolled nurses could be envisioned as future leaders in nutritional care provision and more efforts should be channelled to upskill them, address their challenges and review their suggestions.

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