

The Lived Experience of Nursing Severe Burns Injury Patients A Phenomenological Inquiry

Rachel Anne Kornhaber

Clinical Nurse Specialist, Graduate Diploma (Burns)

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DECLARATION

The University of Adelaide

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, where deposited in the Discipline Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Signed:

Dated: 17th of September 2009.

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ABSTRACT

Little nursing research has focused on nurses' experiences of nursing severe burns injury patients. This study has provided a gateway to explore, describe and document the experience of nursing severe burns injury patients. This thereby adds to the existing body of nursing knowledge upon which the nursing care of patients with severe burns injury can be made in an informative manner with confidence.

This descriptive phenomenological study describes the lived experiences of seven full time registered nurses that care for patients who have sustained a severe burns injury. The descriptive phenomenology of Husserl and the methodological interpretations of Colaizzi underpin this study. Purposeful sampling was utilised to select participants who work in a severe burns injury unit in New South Wales, Australia. The use of in-depth interviews was used to generate data about the participants' personal and professional experiences' of nursing severe burns injury patients. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, analysed and described using a descriptive phenomenological methodology.

Twenty eight cluster themes emerged from the participants' experiences which were further merged into nine emergent themes that depicted the experiences of nurses caring for severe burns injury patients which formed the basis of the findings reported. Participants described burns nursing as both physically and emotionally demanding yet rewarding. It was shown that burns nurses have a resilient nature with the ability to cope with the challenges of burns nursing. Participant nurses described how they emotionally detached and became hardened to the devastation of a severe burns injury. The unique bond that formed between burns nurses and their patients' demonstrated a relationship embedded in trust and understanding that allowed the

nurse to continue caring for burns patients for extended periods. Commitment and dedication were found to be fundamental elements for nursing burns patients. Participant nurses were found to feel emotionally exhausted, powerless and burnt out; however, feelings of accomplishment and motivation outweighed these negative emotions. Support and unity was identified as fundamental to burns nursing, without the support of the burns team nurse participants believed that they would not be able to care for patients with severe burns injury.

The findings of this study have provided an insight into the experience of nursing severe burns injury patients. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the care of burns patients and the well being of the burns nurses who care for these patients. The paucity of available literature in the area of burns nursing concludes that more research is required into the impact of nursing severe burns injury patients.