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Changes in intensive care sedation practices over the past decade: how have they impacted on the lived experience of mechanically ventilated patients? A phenomenological inquiry

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Abstract

Daily sedation interruption (DSI) has been associated with improved physical outcomes such as short ventilator and intensive care unit (ICU) stay including increased survivorship. Numerous studies argue that many survivors continue to suffer from the effects of critical illness and ICU treatment. To date, only one study has investigated the long-term effects of DSI on critical illness ICU survivors.

This study explored twelve people's lived experience of critical illness in ICU and beyond. Participants were aged between 20 and 76 years with ICU stays of 3 to 36 days in a 16 bed ICU in a large regional referral hospital in NSW, Australia. The study was conducted using a Hermeneutic Phenomenological approach. Participants were mechanically ventilated and underwent DSI during their critical illness in ICU. In-depth face to face interviews with twelve participants were conducted at two weeks and up to eleven months after discharge from ICU. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Thematic analysis was conducted and the overarching theme was 'being in limbo' with major subthemes of 'being disrupted'; 'being imprisoned' and 'being trapped'.

The findings of this study suggest that DSI does not improve the lived experience of critical illness in ICU and beyond. Recommendations are made for new models of care that support and mitigate the patients' experiences in and beyond ICU.

Biography

C. Tembo Agness is a casual academic at the University of Newcastle, Australia as well as a practicing intensive care nurse. Her research earned her an invitation to present at an international conference in Montreal Canada in June, 2011. As well as presenting at various international conferences in Canada, international congress of aging and gerontology in Paris, France and the Second Congress of Neurology and Epidemiology in Nice, France. She has presented at National level forums. She has published in peer reviewed journals and she is now working on her post doctoral research examining cognitive impairment in ICU survivors as one of the findings from her study.

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