The Structure of the Lived Experience of the Expert Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) Nurse and Their Meaning of Expertise

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How do Expert ECT Nurses Across the US and Internationally, Describe their Practice?

• Problem
  • Evidence-based advances in ECT practice has not been studied.
• Purpose
  • This descriptive, phenomenological study describes the expert ECT nurses’ experience of their practice.
• Protocol
  • A purposive sample was obtained through APNA’s Member’s Bridge and the International Society for Neurostimulation.

Methodology

• APNF funded study
• Literature review
• IRB approval
• Recruited nurses who have worked with ECT patients for more than 5 years
• Descriptive phenomenological study using Husserl’s phenomenology and Giorgi’s method
• In depth 1-1.5 hour interviews, transcribed and coded by 2 researchers using Atlas ti 6.1 software
• 9 participants
• Themes and clinical, demographics analyzed for participants to achieve saturation
Evidence-based Treatment Advances Changing the Role of ECT Nurse

- Electrode placement
- Stimulus dosing
- Seizure threshold titration
- Changes in waveform and pulse width
- Use of physiological monitoring
- Choice of anesthetic agents
- Use of “time outs”

Non-procedural, Evidence-based Factors Changing Role of ECT Nurse

- Expanded roles for nursing (i.e., nurse anesthetist and nurse practitioner)
- Movement from inpatient to outpatient treatment (continuation and maintenance)
- More complex and ill patients requiring increased monitoring and more clinically sophisticated practice (i.e. in ICU)
- Greater regulation
- Advent of novel neuromodulation methods
- Greater attention to treatment-resistance

Themes of Expert ECT Nursing Practice

- Knowing the Patient
- Running the Service from Top to Bottom
- A Winning Team
- Need for ongoing education, development of best practices, and research
- Fighting stigma, misrepresentation, and efforts to banish ECT
The Expert ECT Nurse-pre-Treatment

- Personalizes the preparation/teaching of patients and family relative to their concerns, cost/benefit (i.e., anesthesia, memory loss, incontinence, exposed while wearing gown)
- Orient patients to ECT suite
- Outreaches and consults to patients/families about the value of ECT
- Schedules treatments taking into account individualized needs of patients
- Assures that pre-treatment labs, consents, orders are current (One review found 37 different forms needed for compliance!)
- Conducts standardized clinical ratings
- Advocates for patient with post-ictal headache or agitation

Knowing the Patient

- "We had some serious snowstorms this year, so knowing that A.S. lives in a rural area, I made sure to coordinate so she had at least 2 treatments a week"
- The patient said: "I smiled when I saw you in the room. I did not recognize anyone else but knew you would make sure that I did not have a terrible headache or complications"

The Expert ECT Nurse-Treatment

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Running the Service from Top to Bottom

- "The doctors are busy...every question about ECT (appropriateness, labs, potential complications) goes through me"
- "I check the equipment, assure we are ready for JCAHO, teach the nursing students and medical residents, review P & P, teach in the fellowship program- it is 'soup to nuts'"

The Expert ECT Recovery Nurse

- Primary patient advocate following treatment when patients still under effects of anesthesia and provides constant care
- Patient monitoring (VS, pulse oximetry, mental status, breathing properly, suctioning, administering O₂, react rapidly to signs of negative changes)
- Assess, re-orient, provide supportive care for post-ictal disorientation, assess safety to ambulate

The Expert ECT Nurse-
Post treatment

- Conducting inpatient group psychotherapy to decrease isolation and reduce stigma
- Addressing patient and family concerns about treatment/side effects and providing education
- Assuring holistic care and coordination of health care providers for vulnerable patients who often have multiple health conditions
- Coordinating future treatment schedules and managing CQI
- Educating Nursing and Medical personnel about ECT
- Increasingly, blending new expertise in brain stimulation methods with expertise in ECT
A Winning Team

- "I have been an ECT nurse for 35 years and I have overseen more than 30,000 treatments. I have had the gratifying experience over and over to see our patients get better"
- "It is so rewarding to see a patient who is in the ICU or similarly debilitated get so much better that he walks out the door waving. ECT does that"
- "Being on the ECT team is like being a starting pitcher for the Yankees- we get used to winning and we like it!"

Fairly Wide Variations

- In practice (i.e., anesthetic, electrode placement, pre-medication with caffeine, use of clinical scales)
- In employment of advanced practice roles (i.e., NP roles in Canada, Australia and New Zealand emerging but primary care-focused)
- In ECT education and training (i.e., apprentice model to completion and creation of fellowships and ISEN courses)

Evolving Role of ECT Nurse

Brain Stimulation Clinical Leader

- ECT Expert
- Additional Brain Stim Clinical Expertise
- Involvement in International, Interdisciplinary Organizations Dedicated to Therapeutic Brain Stimulation
- Knowledge Development and Research
- Translation to Clinical Interface
- Leading Change Initiatives to Promote Clinical Excellence
Evidence-based Nursing Practice

- Evidence-Based Nursing Practice does not vary from location to location but instead, involves integrating solid research findings, clinical expertise, and patient preference, and implementing them in nursing practice, in order to increase the quality of patient care
- Goal is to provide the highest quality and most cost-efficient nursing care possible

Looking forward

- Need for Ongoing Education, Development of Best Practices and Research
- Fighting stigma, Misrepresentation, and Efforts to Banish or Defund ECT
- Follow FDA hearings on re-classification of ECT devices
- APNA Recommendations for 2013 APA Guidelines on ECT

Evidence-based Practice and Knowledge Dissemination