

Abstract

Original Paper

I was in real pain’: Surgical nurses’ personal pain experiences in Ghana

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Abstract

Background: Nurses are known to inadequately manage pain. Patients and other care givers allude that nurses do not empathize and cannot appreciate the pain they go through.

Aim: This study sought to explore nurses’ personal pain experiences such as types of pain, the response to pain, effects and management of pain.

Methods: A qualitative interpretive design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit 17 nurses who had at least two years working experience on the surgical ward. The study was conducted at two hospitals in Accra, Ghana. Data was collected through individual face-to-face in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted in English, audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. Trustworthiness or rigor was ensured through member checking and prolonged engagement. Data was analyzed concurrently following the processes of content analysis.

Results: All the nurses had experienced some form of severe pain with negative consequences. Nurses described the types of pain experienced such as dysmenorrhea, labor pain, post-operative pain, abdominal pain, and pain from whitlow and carbuncles. Responses to pain included reluctance to report pain because of personal preferences and dislike of analgesic intake. Some nurses felt that it was embarrassing for other to know their inability to bear pain if they reported pain. The effects of pain included decreased productivity, absenteeism, insomnia, and emotional consequences. Nurses managed their pain with orthodox analgesics in the form of injections, oral, and suppository, herbal medicine, and non-pharmacologic approaches based on the type of pain.

Conclusion: Nurses had personal experiences of pain and considered pain as an unpleasant phenomenon. It is important that nurses remain conscious of their personal pain experiences so that they can empathize with patients in pain and manage their patients’ pain effectively.

Key words: Qualitative research; interview; pain management; nursing; pain effects