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**The experience of hospitalization first time for
an acute medical illness**

by

Colette Evonne Blockley

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Abstract

This research focused on exploring and describing patients' experience of their first hospitalization for an acute medical illness. Twelve participants who had experienced their first hospitalization within the last two years were involved. Unstructured, open-ended interviews were employed to obtain data. Thematic analysis (Burnard, 1991) was used to provide a detailed systematic description of issues addressed in the interviews.

Six main themes emerged from the participants' stories. Waiting was the predominant theme that emerged from the participants' experiences in the accident and emergency department. Once admitted to the ward, the need to know, support, environmental issues (which included the physical environment, privacy and safety issues) are the themes that emerged from the data. On discharge and post discharge, lack of information was a theme that had significance for the majority of the participants.

The implications of these findings for practitioners who work in an acute hospital setting, especially with patients who have not previously experienced an acute hospitalization, are explored.

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