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Implementing a Critical Care Outreach Team: What difference has it made for nurses?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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In Nursing

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Kathryn Erin Davies

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to describe the implementation of Critical Care Outreach (CCO) and to understand what difference implementing a Critical Care Outreach Team (CCOT) has made to ward nurses in a secondary level general hospital in New Zealand. A CCOT was established at the study hospital in 2006. The aim was to implement an early warning score, to provide education and to share appropriate intensive care skills from CCOT nurses on the wards. Additionally, patients discharged from the Intensive Care Unit were to be followed up. The difference this made to ward nurses in this hospital was unclear. International studies had reported suboptimal patient care on acute wards and the emergence of CCOTs. Research was warranted to gain an understanding of the impact of the service on ward nurses.

The methodology chosen for the study was case study, and was underpinned by Change Management Theory and elements of whole system reform (Fullan, 2010). Fullan’s (2007) Change Management Theory of a three phased approach to change management, initiation, implementation and institutionalisation was selected for the study. Data was collected from a nursing focus group, three interviews, and District Health Board documents related to the CCOT. Interviews and nursing focus group data were analysed by thematic analysis and documents analysed by subject.

Implementing the CCOT facilitated the shift of late recognition/late intervention of patients to early recognition/early intervention. An area of whole hospital reform occurred. The use of an early warning score promoted more timely patient review, communication between nurses and doctors, improved observation frequency and an environment of objectivity developed. Nurses benefited from education, were empowered to escalate patient concerns, improved their assessment and specific clinical skills, and reported that they were supported by the CCOT.

The CCOT has had a positive effect on the early recognition and early intervention of the physiologically unstable patient. The challenge to New Zealand nursing now is to continue to build on the evidence from this study that CCOT has a beneficial impact on ward nurses. The challenge to the District Health Board is to preserve CCOT to ensure that nurses are supported and late recognition/late intervention is truly a phenomenon of the past.
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# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................................. I  

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................................... II  

TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................................................ III  

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................................... VII  

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................. VIII  

ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................................................................................... IX  

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 1 
  
  INTRODUCTION............................................................................................................................... 1  
  BACKGROUND.................................................................................................................................... 1  
    Aim of research............................................................................................................................... 3  
  CHANGE MANAGEMENT THEORY ...................................................................................................................... 3  
    Three phases of change management ............................................................................................. 4  
    Initiation ........................................................................................................................................ 4  
    Implementation ............................................................................................................................... 5  
    Institutionalisation ....................................................................................................................... 6  
    Whole system reform ................................................................................................................... 7  
    Case study design ......................................................................................................................... 10  
  STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS ............................................................................................................................ 10  

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................................................................................12  
  
  INTRODUCTION............................................................................................................................... 12  
  Search methods ................................................................................................................................. 12  
  Background to Critical Care Outreach ............................................................................................... 13  
  Response to suboptimal care ............................................................................................................. 15  
  Early warning scoring systems ............................................................................................................ 17  
  Implementing a critical care outreach ............................................................................................... 19  
    Professional considerations ........................................................................................................... 20  
    Educational considerations .......................................................................................................... 21  
    Operational considerations .......................................................................................................... 22  
  Impact of CCOT on ward nurses ....................................................................................................... 22  
    Quantitative perspective ............................................................................................................... 23  
    Qualitative perspective ............................................................................................................... 24  
  Summary........................................................................................................................................ 26
List of tables

**TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF ICU BEDS TO POPULATION FOR LARGE DHBs FOR 2002** .................................................... 46

**TABLE 2. CRITICAL CARE DEVELOPMENT GROUP, MINUTES DECEMBER 1 2005** .................................................. 60

**TABLE 3. EARLY WARNING SCORE** ............................................................................................................. 67

**TABLE 4. ACUTE CARE TRAINING SIX WEEK EDUCATION PROGRAMME** ......................................................... 75

**TABLE 5. SUMMER AUDIT RESULTS 2011** ........................................................................................................ 87
# List of figures

**Figure 1.** Design Schematic. Adopted from Rosenberg and Yates, 2007. .......................................... 34

**Figure 2.** Process of analysing data. .................................................................................................. 41

**Figure 3.** Presentation to Senior Management. .................................................................................. 60

**Figure 4.** Management Presentation................................................................................................. 63

**Figure 5.** Critical Care Education Strategy. ....................................................................................... 71

**Figure 6.** Critical Care Outreach Strategy......................................................................................... 72

**Figure 7.** Presentation to Senior Management. .................................................................................. 77

**Figure 8.** ICU referrals by year. Source (CCOT Database). ............................................................... 84

**Figure 9.** Cardiac arrests relative to patient discharges 2005-2010 .................................................... 85

**Figure 10.** Observation frequency links to staffing levels. ............................................................... 88
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Acute Care Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALERT</td>
<td>Acute Life Threatening Events Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCO</td>
<td>Critical Care Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCOT</td>
<td>Critical Care Outreach Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINAHL</td>
<td>Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNM</td>
<td>Charge Nurse Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNS</td>
<td>Clinical Nurse Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHB</td>
<td>District Health Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECC</td>
<td>Emergency Care Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED</td>
<td>Emergency Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWS</td>
<td>Early Warning Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDU</td>
<td>High Dependency Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU</td>
<td>Intensive Care Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHI</td>
<td>Institute for Health Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERIT</td>
<td>Medical Emergency Response Improvement Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MET</td>
<td>Medical Emergency Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWS</td>
<td>Early Warning Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NeTP</td>
<td>New Entrant to Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICE</td>
<td>National Institute for Health And Clinical Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFR</td>
<td>Not For Resuscitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Patient At Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART</td>
<td>Patient At Risk Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBMA</td>
<td>Programme Budgeting and Marginal Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMO</td>
<td>Registered Medical Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRT</td>
<td>Rapid Response Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMO</td>
<td>Senior Medical Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTS</td>
<td>Track and Trigger Score</td>
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