

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

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

by

Colette Evonne Blockley

A thesis submitted to Massey University of Palmerston North
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Nursing

December 2000

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.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful for the support and encouragement I have received with this study over the past three years, and wish that I could record here the numerous contributions made by family, friends, nursing colleagues and fellow masters' students. There are some whose contribution has been vital to the completion of the study, and it gives me much pleasure to be able to acknowledge them now.

- To my study participants, who freely shared their experiences with me and who inspired me with their enthusiasm and willingness to make their experiences known. I hope that I have been able to do justice to your stories.
- To Atanui Parata, who was always there. Thankyou for your love, support and understanding.
- To my aunt by proxy Mrs. Hilly O'Leary, who made my trips to Massey such a pleasure by providing good food, a comfortable bed, great company and the numerous trips to and from the University campus.
- To my mother Yvonne Morrison, who never once stopped believing in me.
- Throughout this study I have worked full time and I thank my friends and colleagues at Otago Polytechnic Nursing and Midwifery Department. They have lightened my workload, shared my research highs and lows and offered me intellectual support and encouragement.

- To Paul Watson, my thesis supervisor who guided this study in the initial stages. His task was not always an easy one.
- Thankyou to Professor Julie Boddy and Dr. Cheryl Benn without whose help this project would never have been finished.
- I am very grateful to the Research and Development Committee of Otago Polytechnic for their generous grant and for the Fieldhouse special award for research I received from the C.L Bailey Trust in August 1999.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.0 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Orientation to the study..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Structure of the thesis..... | 2 |
| | |
| 2.0 Literature Review | 5 |
| 2.1 Background..... | 5 |
| 2.2 Themes:..... | 6 |
| 2.2.1 Physical needs..... | 6 |
| 2.2.2 Nurse-patient relationship..... | 8 |
| 2.2.3 Information sharing..... | 10 |
| 2.2.4 Family and others support..... | 13 |
| 2.2.5 Ways of coping..... | 16 |
| 2.3 Summary of the review..... | 20 |
| | |
| 3.0 Research design and Method | 21 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 21 |
| 3.2 Research design..... | 21 |
| 3.2.1 Qualitative descriptive research methods.. | 21 |
| 3.3 Participant selection..... | 22 |
| 3.3.1 Recruitment of participants..... | 22 |
| 3.3.2 Inclusion criteria..... | 23 |
| 3.4 Ethical considerations..... | 23 |
| 3.4.1 Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality..... | 23 |
| 3.4.2 Consent of participants..... | 24 |
| 3.5 Data collection..... | 25 |
| 3.5.1 The interviews..... | 25 |
| 3.5.2 The interview process..... | 26 |
| 3.6 Data analysis..... | 27 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3.6.1 Thematic analysis..... | 27 |
| 3.6.2 Using thematic analysis..... | 28 |
| 3.7 Rigour..... | 30 |
| 3.7.1 Trustworthiness..... | 31 |
| 3.7.1.1 Transferability..... | 31 |
| 3.7.1.2 Dependability..... | 32 |
| 3.7.1.3 Confirmability..... | 32 |
| 3.7.2 Researcher bias..... | 33 |
| 3.7.2 Researcher's journal..... | 33 |
| 3.8 Summary..... | 34 |
| | |
| 4.0 Preadmission to Hospital..... | 35 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 35 |
| 4.2 Evaluating and acting..... | 35 |
| 4.3 Accident and Emergency..... | 42 |
| 4.4 Summary..... | 46 |
| | |
| 5.0 The ward..... | 47 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 47 |
| 5.2 The need for information..... | 47 |
| 5.3 Support..... | 54 |
| 5.3.1 Support from health professionals..... | 55 |
| 5.3.2 Support from family and friends..... | 66 |
| 5.4 Environmental issues..... | 70 |
| 5.4.1 Physical environment..... | 70 |
| 5.4.2 Privacy..... | 73 |
| 5.4.3 Safety..... | 83 |
| 5.5 Summary..... | 85 |
| | |
| 6.0 Discharge..... | 87 |
| 6.1 Introduction..... | 87 |
| 6.2 Lack of information..... | 88 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 6.3 Post discharge..... | 91 |
| 6.4 Summary..... | 95 |
| 7.0 Implication for nursing..... | 96 |
| 7.1 Introduction..... | 96 |
| 7.2 Summary of experience..... | 96 |
| 7.2.1 Preadmission and accident and emergency.. | 97 |
| 7.2.2 The Ward..... | 98 |
| 7.2.3 Discharge and post discharge..... | 99 |
| 7.3 Implications for Practice, education and research..... | 100 |
| 7.3.1 Practice..... | 101 |
| 7.3.2 Education..... | 102 |
| 7.3.2 Research..... | 103 |
| 7.4 Conclusion..... | 104 |
| | |
| Appendixes | |
| 1. Initial invitation..... | 106 |
| 2. Advertisement in local paper..... | 107 |
| 3. Information sheet..... | 108 |
| 4. Massey University Human Ethics Committee approval..... | 111 |
| 5. Ethics Committee Otago approval..... | 112 |
| 6. Approval for advertisement from Massey University Humans Ethics Committee..... | 113 |
| 7. Consent form..... | 114 |
| | |
| References..... | 115 |