



Ensuring Patient Dignity and Respect in the ICU – A New Approach



A novel, multi-method approach presented in the journal *Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics* highlights the need of defining and ensuring respectful care in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The researchers at John Hopkins believe that loss of dignity and lack of respectful treatment are preventable harms in healthcare.

"Having quantitative measures of treatment with respect and dignity in the ICU that could be easily administered would be a valuable complement to the qualitative data resulting from the other research methods, where the respondents answer in their own words," says Sugarman. "Future work will be directed at the feasibility of using a smaller set of survey items that will be easier for both patients and researchers to manage," he says.

The study of respect and dignity in the ICU was led by the Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality and was funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The goal of the study is to decrease preventable harms in the ICU by adopting systems engineering approaches.

Dominick Frosch, PhD, a fellow at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation emphasises that loss of dignity and lack of respectful treatment are harms that should be considered just as important to prevent as hospital acquired infections and medical errors. He also points out that this new study by the John Hopkins team may help lay down the foundation from which healthcare providers can build in order to ensure all patients receive care that is respectful and that preserves their dignity, whether it's in the ICU or any other healthcare setting.

The researchers point out that it is difficult to identify and rectify harms to patients' dignity mainly because of a lack of a conceptual lens through which this can be viewed and corrected. However, with this new approach, it should now be possible to measure and develop means to help prevent loss of dignity and respect in the ICU.

Source: Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics

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Published on : Sat, 14 Mar 2015