PROVISION OF PAIN COMFORT CARE FOR THE OLDER HOSPITALISED PERSON: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF NURSING CLINICAL PAIN MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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The aim of this presentation is to present findings from research designed to explore the clinical practices of nine registered nurses (RNs) when managing pain in 42 older persons (those aged over 65 years). The study was located in an acute care setting on eight medical and surgical wards in two tertiary referral hospitals in Australia.

The study uses a qualitative focused ethnographic approach. Focused ethnography is an innovative approach to research that is particularly useful for exploring culturally mediated and patterned acts of care expression that occur within a small group in a specific context. The point is to explore and gain insight from the older person and the RN’s pain assessment and management care practices. The methods used included participant observation, document review, and interviews with nurses and older inpatients over a six-month period of immersion in the field by the researcher.

Thematic analysis identified that both the acute care system and the nurses who were providing care often excluded the older person from participating in the management of their pain. These differing views meant that communication and understanding regarding the assessment and management of pain was hampered. Findings suggest that pain relief and care requires inclusion of the older person in the provision of care.