

## **Nurses Care Practices at End of Life in Intensive Care Units in the Kingdom of Bahrain**

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**Abstract :** This paper presents the preliminary findings from a study exploring nurse's contributions to end of life decisions and to the care of dying patients in ICU units in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The process of dying is complex as medical clinicians are frequently unable to say with certainty when death will occur. It is generally accepted that end of life care begins when it is possible to know that death is imminent. Nurses do not make medical treatment decisions when caring for a dying patient. There are, however, many other types of decisions made when a patient is approaching the end of life and nurses are either formally or informally part of these decision making processes. This study explored nurses care practices at the end of life, in two ICU units in large hospitals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The research design was a grounded theory approach. Ten nurses participated, six of whom were Bahraini nationals and four were Indian. A core category death avoidance talk was supported by three major subcategories, degrees of involvement in decision making; signalling and creating an awareness of death; care shifting from dying patients to family. Despite nurses asserting that they carried out the orders of doctors and had no role in decision making processes at end of life this study showed that there were degrees of nurse involvement. Doctors frequently discussed the patient's clinical condition with nurses and also sought information regarding the family. Information about the family was of particular relevance if the doctor was considering a DNR order, which the nurses equated with dying. Families were not always informed when a DNR decision was made. When families were not informed the nurses engaged in sophisticated rituals signalling and creating awareness to family members that the death of their loved one was near. This process also involved a subtle shifting of care from the dying patient to the family. This seminar paper will focus particularly on how nurses signal and create an awareness of death in an ICU setting. The findings suggest that despite the avoidance of death talk in the ICU nurses indirectly convey and create an awareness that death is near to family members.

**Keywords :** decision making, dying patients, end of life, intensive care unit

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