

Interhospital transfers in intensive care – observational research on the move within high-tech context

Key messages

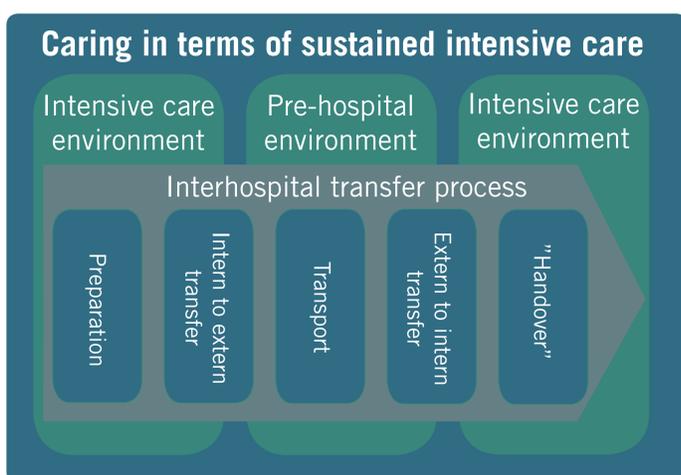
- Video recording and participant observation is a suitable data collection strategy within a dynamic and constantly changing high-tech environment.
- During transfers, patients are affected. They become more vulnerable, moving between visibility and invisibility, with risk of exposure and discomfort.
- This design has challenges regarding data collection in a high-tech mobile setting but is unique in terms of intensive care research.
- A solid knowledge and awareness of research ethics is of fundamental importance within intensive care.



Photos: Jonas Karlsson

Introduction

Over the years, there has been a considerable increase in intensive care unit (ICU) to unit transfers outside hospitals. Transfers are considered to be complex and challenging for those involved and potentially hazardous for critically ill patients. This is because intensive care takes place in a mobile environment that moves across different high tech contexts. There is a significant lack of research with qualitative approaches focused on the patients' unique situation within the transfer process.



Process of interhospital intensive care unit to unit transfer.

Aim

To explore the nature of the patient's situation when being transferred between ICUs.

Method

A purposeful sample resulted in the inclusion of 8 transfers with 7 patients. Video recording and participant observation were conducted in each transfer process. This meant that the researcher followed the patient throughout the transfer process and through different high-tech environments. The data collection resulted in 7 hours and 23 minutes of video material and field notes, which were analysed using a hermeneutic approach.

Preliminary results

- The patient's situation is characterised by an existence between visibility and invisibility.
- The patient is in an extremely vulnerable position during transfers, with a high risk of discomfort, objectification, and during certain phases becoming exposed in public spaces.
- The patient emerges as a fettered body but still in constant motion within a dwindling space.



Photos: Jonas Karlsson

Conclusion

This study and its results is important as it explores the patients' situation during the different phases of the transfer process by using creative methods.

From a caring science perspective, this study contributes to new knowledge concerning the patients' situation during transfers and how the caring atmosphere could be affected.

This new knowledge and increased awareness can be of fundamental importance in order to create and develop a safe and high-quality caring atmosphere in terms of an increasing number of interhospital transfers in intensive care.

From a methodological perspective, this study shows the potential in using creative and holistic qualitative approaches, such as video recording, participant observation, and hermeneutics in a dynamic high-tech environment.



Corresponding author:
Jonas Karlsson, CCRN, Doctoral student,
University of Borås, Sweden
jonas.karlsson@hb.se

Co-authors:
Isabell Fridh, PhD, Associate professor and Thomas Eriksson, PhD, University of Borås, Sweden

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