

## Nurses' Experience In Caring For Patients With Traumatic Spinal Cord Injuries

Shareena Bibi Mohd Arif

Hospital Tengku Ampuan Rahimah, Klang, Malaysia.

**Introduction:** Trauma is generally linked to terrible events that occur in a person's life that produce physical and psychological wounds. Patients with traumatic spinal cord injury have experienced a life-shattering event (Hickey 2002). Nurses' involvement in caring for these patients starts from the time the patient is admitted to the hospital until they end their rehabilitation (Pellatt 2003; Sheerin 2005). However, there are no studies that specifically examine nurses' experiences when caring for these patients. This phenomenon has yet to be explored from the nursing perspective. Therefore, this opens an opportunity for the researcher to explore nurses' experiences in caring for patients with traumatic spinal cord injuries with neurological deficits.

**Methodology:** Using a phenomenological approach, guided by the insights of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Max van Manen, six participants from the Spinal Unit, Royal Adelaide Hospital, through purposive sampling method were interviewed. Their responses were transcribed into a text. This text has been subject to hermeneutic analysis using the Burnard's (1991) 14 steps approach. This work was operationalise and further enhanced with the reflective emphasis on interpretation suggested by van Manen (1997) and Gadamer (1975).

**Results:** Four essential themes emerged: '*Nurses' interpretation of the patients and family*', '*The passage of care*', '*Patient needs*' and '*Hope and grief*'.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** Spinal nursing care is a complex arena and the dynamic voyage that the nurses experienced while caring for patients with traumatic spinal cord injuries that had neurological deficits provide ideas to help develop long-term strategies for spinal care nurses in the future. It is essential for nurses who are interested in this specialty to be prepared for the dynamic environment of care and nursing practice. The fundamentals of nursing care remain unchanged; however, the specific experience, skills and knowledge related to spinal care remain distinct to spinal nursing.