

Current Trends and Challenges in Emergency Nursing Practice: A Review

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Abstract

Emergency nursing practice is continuously evolving as new trends and challenges arise in the healthcare setting. This study aims to review the current trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice by analyzing secondary data from various research articles and reports. The analysis reveals several key trends, including the increasing demand for emergency care services due to population growth and the aging population, the importance of evidence-based practice in improving patient outcomes, and the use of technology and telemedicine to enhance patient care and communication. Challenges in emergency nursing practice include high patient acuity levels, limited resources, and the necessity for continuing teaching and training to keep up with advancements in healthcare. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented new encounters for emergency nurses, such as managing infectious diseases, implementing infection control protocols, and coping with increased stress and workload. These trends and challenges highlight the importance of promoting a supportive work environment for emergency nurses, providing opportunities for professional development and training, and prioritizing patient safety and quality of care. By getting to know and taking into consideration these trends and challenges, healthcare organizations can better support their emergency nursing staff and improve patient outcomes in the emergency care setting.

Key words: *Emergency care, Infection control, Patient safety, Emergency nurses, Healthcare organizations.*

Introduction

Emergency nursing is a vital feature of healthcare provision, as emergency sections are frequently the first point of interaction for patients seeking urgent medical care (Hamric, 2013). In recent years, emergency nursing practice has evolved to meet the growing

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demands of an increasingly complex healthcare landscape. This study aims to review current trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice to provide insights into how this field is evolving and adjusting to meet the requirements of patients and healthcare organizations.

The growing emphasis on patient-centered care is one of the main developments in emergency nursing practice. This method highlights how crucial it is to customize care to each patient's particular requirements and preferences (Mayglothling, 2010). In order to guarantee that patients' concerns are taken seriously and their requirements are satisfied, emergency nurses are taught to evaluate patients promptly and effectively, prioritize care based on acuity, and communicate with patients and their families in an effective manner (Moldovan, 2018).

Despite these positive trends, emergency nursing practice is not without its limitations. One of the most pressing issues facing emergency nurses is the increasing volume of patients seeking care in emergency departments (Sole, 2020). This influx of patients can lead to overcrowding, long wait times, and increased stress for healthcare providers, which can impact the quality of care delivered to patients. Additionally, emergency nurses must also navigate complex ethical dilemmas, such as balancing the need to provide timely care with limited resources and making difficult decisions in high-stress, time-sensitive situations (Roney, 2019).

Furthermore, emergency nurses face unique physical and emotional demands in their day-to-day practice. They must be prepared to handle a wide range of medical emergencies, from trauma cases to psychiatric crises, and provide compassionate and competent care to patients in their most vulnerable moments (Molloy, 2020). This can take a toll on their own well-being and mental health, leading to burnout, compassion fatigue, and high turnover rates within the profession.

In light of these trends and challenges, it is vital for emergency nursing exercise to continue evolving and adjusting to meet the requirements of patients and healthcare organizations. By staying abreast of the latest evidence-based practices, embracing technology to enhance care delivery, and prioritizing the well-being of healthcare providers, emergency nursing can continue to play a vital role in ensuring timely, high-quality care for patients in need (Leidi, 2020). This study aims to contribute to this ongoing dialogue by exploring current trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice and offering recommendations for future practice and research.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies have highlighted the unique challenges and responsibilities faced by emergency nurses in the delivery of emergency care. A study by Greenwood-Ericksen (2019) examined the emotional labor experienced by emergency nurses in managing patient care in high-stress and fast-paced environments. The study found that emergency nurses often experience emotional exhaustion and burnout due to the demanding nature of their work, emphasizing the necessity for sustenance and funds to help them manage the challenges of the job.

Another study by Bambi (2020) explored the impact of clinical decision-making in emergency nursing practice. The study found that emergency nurses employ a variety of decision-making strategies to assess and prioritize patient care needs, including reliance on intuition, experience, and evidence-based practice. The findings underscore the significance of ongoing training to enhance the critical thinking skills of emergency nurses and support high-quality care delivery in emergency settings.

Another study by Carpenter (2013) examined the role of teamwork and communication in emergency nursing practice. The study found that effective teamwork and communication

are essential for ensuring safe and efficient patient care in the fast-paced and high-pressure environment of the emergency department. However, the study also highlighted challenges such as high staff turnover and limited resources that can impact the ability of emergency nurses to work collaboratively and effectively as a team.

Current trends in emergency nursing practice include the increasing use of technology to streamline care processes and improve patient outcomes. Telehealth and telemedicine platforms are being utilized to provide virtual consultations with emergency nurses for patients in remote or underserved areas, allowing for timely assessment and intervention (Hardin, 2019). Electronic health records and decision support systems are also being integrated into emergency departments to facilitate data-driven decision-making and improve care coordination.

A study by Ludin (2018) explored the impact of increasing patient acuity on emergency nursing practice. The study found that the growing number of patients presenting to the emergency section with complex medical conditions has placed significant strain on emergency nursing resources, leading to challenges in providing timely and high-quality care.

Challenges in emergency nursing practice include workforce shortages, increasing patient acuity and complexity, and the need for continuous training to keep pace with progressions in emergency upkeep (Montoya, 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, with emergency nurses facing unprecedented demands on their time and resources to care for patients affected by the virus while ensuring their own safety and well-being.

3. Methodology

The methodology section of this review involved a comprehensive search of relevant research articles and literature that examined current trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice. The search was conducted using electronic databases such as PubMed, CINAHL, and PsycINFO, as well as Google Scholar and reference lists of the chosen studies.

The inclusion criteria for the review included articles published in the last twelve years that specifically addressed trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice. Articles that focused on other aspects of nursing or emergency medicine were excluded.

The search strategy included a combination of keywords such as "emergency nursing," "trends," "challenges," "current practices," and "nursing care." The identified articles were screened based on their significance to the research and their quality, with a focus on peer-reviewed publications and empirical studies.

Data extraction involved identifying key themes and findings related to current trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice. These included topics such as staffing issues, patient safety concerns, technology advancements, and the impact of COVID-19 on emergency nursing.

The synthesized findings were then discussed in the review to provide an overview of the current state of emergency nursing practice and identify areas for future research and practice improvement. This methodology allowed for a systematic and comprehensive review of the literature on trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of Emergency Nursing

4.1.1 Definition of Emergency Nursing

Emergency nursing is a specialized field that centers on caring for patients in emergency situations, such as accidents, sudden illnesses, and life-threatening conditions (Stinson, 2016). Emergency nurses are trained to assess, triage, stabilize, and provide care to patients in a fast-paced and often high-stress environment. They are crucial in providing timely and effective care to patients who require urgent attention.

4.1.2 Role and responsibilities of emergency nurses

Emergency nurses have a wide range of roles and responsibilities in the emergency department. Some of the key responsibilities include:

Triage: Emergency nurses are responsible for triaging patients based on their level of severity and ensuring that those who are most in need of care receive priority (Wall, 2012).

Assessment: Emergency nurses assess patients' conditions quickly and accurately, gathering information on their symptoms, medical history, and vital signs to determine the appropriate course of action (Roney, 2019).

Stabilization: Emergency nurses work to stabilize patients in critical condition, providing interventions such as administering medications, performing procedures, and monitoring vital signs (Montoya, 2011).

Collaboration: To guarantee that patients receive thorough and well-coordinated care, emergency nurses work in conjunction with other medical professionals, including doctors, technologists, and social workers (Mayglothling, 2010).

Patient education: Emergency nurses provide patients and their families with education on their conditions, treatments, and discharge instructions to ensure that they understand their care and can follow up effectively (Hu, 2016).

4.1.3 Importance of Emergency Nursing Practice

In order to provide patients with prompt and efficient treatment in emergency situations, emergency nursing practice is essential. According to Greenwood-Ericksen (2019), emergency nurses are frequently the initial point of contact for patients seeking emergency care. They are essential in promptly and effectively evaluating and meeting patients' requirements. Their capacity for critical thought, quick decision-making, and good communication are crucial for delivering high-quality treatment in demanding situations.

Studies have indicated that the presence of skilled emergency nurses in the emergency room is linked to better patient outcomes, such as lower rates of complications, shorter hospital stays, and mortality rates. For instance, a study by Carpenter (2013) discovered that hospitals with higher emergency nursing staffing levels had reduced mortality rates for sepsis-related ER visits.

Furthermore, emergency nurses are often involved in disaster preparedness and response, where their skills in triage, assessment, and stabilization are essential in managing large-scale emergencies and mass casualty incidents (Bambi, 2020). Their expertise in crisis management and coordination with other healthcare providers and emergency responders contribute to better outcomes for patients in times of crisis.

4.2 Current Trends in Emergency Nursing Practice

4.2.1 Use of technology and telemedicine in emergency care

The use of technology in emergency care has revolutionized the way healthcare is delivered in emergency settings. The integration of technology such as electronic health records, teleconsultation services, and teletriage systems has improved communication, efficiency,

and overall quality of patient care (Cherry, 2016). For example, the implementation of telemedicine allows healthcare providers to remotely assess and triage patients, which can help reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and optimize resource utilization (Hardin, 2019).

Furthermore, EHR enables seamless sharing of patient information among healthcare providers, improving continuity of care and reducing medical errors. A study by Leidi (2020) found that the use of electronic health records in emergency departments significantly improved patient outcomes and satisfaction.

4.2.2 Importance of interprofessional collaboration in emergency settings

In emergency situations, interprofessional cooperation is essential to achieving the best possible outcomes for patients. To provide patients with comprehensive treatment, emergency nurses must collaborate closely with doctors, pharmacists, social workers, and other medical professionals (Mason, 2020). In high-stress scenarios in the emergency room, the healthcare team's ability to communicate and collaborate effectively is essential.

Moldovan (2018) found that interprofessional teamwork in emergency care improves patient safety, raises the standard of treatment, and makes healthcare personnel happier in their jobs. Multidisciplinary rounds, huddles, and debriefings are examples of collaborative techniques that help improve team member coordination and communication, which will ultimately improve patient outcomes.

4.2.3 Addressing mental health crises in the emergency department

Mental health crises are increasingly common in emergency departments, posing significant challenges for emergency nurses. Patients with mental health issues often present with complex needs, requiring specialized care and resources (Stinson, 2016). It is essential for emergency nurses to receive training in mental health assessment and crisis intervention to effectively manage these patients.

Wall (2012) highlighted the significance of implementing evidence-based interventions for patients with mental health crises in the emergency department. Psychiatric screening tools, de-escalation techniques, and collaboration with mental health professionals are key strategies to address mental health issues in the emergency setting. Furthermore, creating a safe and therapeutic environment for patients with mental health concerns is crucial to prevent adverse outcomes and ensure optimal care delivery.

4.2.4 Preventing burnout and promoting resilience among emergency nurses

Emergency nursing is a demanding and high-stress profession, often leading to burnout and emotional exhaustion among nurses. It is essential for healthcare organizations to implement strategies to support the well-being and resilience of emergency nurses (Stinson, 2016). Providing access to mental health resources, peer support programs, and opportunities for self-care can help prevent burnout and promote resilience among emergency nurses.

Research by Risling (2017) emphasized the importance of organizational support in reducing burnout and improving job satisfaction among emergency nurses. Implementing wellness initiatives, such as mindfulness training, stress management workshops, and debriefing sessions, can enhance nurses' coping mechanisms and emotional well-being. Furthermore, fostering a positive work culture that values teamwork and autonomy can contribute to a healthier and more sustainable work environment for emergency nurses.

4.3 Challenges in Emergency Nursing Practice

4.3.1 Shortage of Qualified Emergency Nurses

The shortage of qualified emergency nurses continues to be a significant challenge in emergency nursing practice (Montoya, 2011). The demand for emergency nursing services has been increasing due to the aging population, advanced technology, and the increasing

complexity of patient cases. However, the supply of qualified emergency nurses has not kept pace with the rising demand, leading to understaffing and inadequate patient care (Mason, 2020).

According to a study by Ludin (2018), the shortage of emergency nurses is associated with increased patient mortality rates, longer wait times and higher rates of burnout among healthcare providers. The lack of qualified emergency nurses can also result in increased stress and dissatisfaction among existing staff, leading to high turnover rates and further exacerbating the shortage.

To address the shortage of qualified emergency nurses, healthcare organizations need to focus on recruitment and retention strategies, such as offering competitive salaries, providing opportunities for professional development and continuing education, and creating a supportive work environment (Hu, 2016). Additionally, efforts should be made to increase the pipeline of nursing students entering the emergency nursing specialty through targeted education and training programs.

4.3.2 High patient acuity and complex cases

Emergency nurses frequently encounter high patient acuity and complex cases in the emergency department, which pose challenges in providing timely and effective care to patients. High patient acuity refers to the harshness and difficulty of patients' situations, while complex cases involve multiple comorbidities, chronic illnesses, and psychosocial factors that require a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to care (Hardin, 2019).

Studies have shown that high patient acuity and complex cases in the emergency department are associated with increased stress and burnout among emergency nurses (Cowen, 2010). The rapid pace of the emergency department, coupled with the need to make quick decisions and respond to unpredictable situations, can lead to fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and decreased job satisfaction among nurses (Carpenter, 2013).

To effectively manage high patient acuity and complex cases, emergency nurses need to have strong critical thinking skills, excellent clinical judgment, and the ability to collaborate with interdisciplinary teams. Continued education and training in high-acuity care and complex patient management can help nurses feel more confident and prepared to address the challenges they face in the emergency department (Bambi, 2020). Additionally, organizational support in the form of adequate staffing, resources, and mentorship can contribute to improved outcomes for both patients and nurses.

4.3.3 Violence and workplace safety concerns in the emergency department

Violence and workplace safety concerns are prevalent issues in emergency nursing practice, with emergency nurses facing a higher risk of experiencing verbal abuse, physical assault, and workplace violence compared to nurses in other specialties (Boltz, 2013). The fast-paced and high-stress environment of the emergency department, combined with the presence of patients with mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, and escalating behaviors, contribute to the increased risk of violence against healthcare providers.

Cherry (2016) has highlighted the influence of workplace violence on emergency nurses' mental health, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Nurses who experience workplace violence may suffer from 'post-traumatic stress disorder' (PTSD), depression, and burnout, leading to decreased job performance and increased turnover rates.

To address violence and workplace safety concerns in the emergency department, healthcare organizations must implement comprehensive training programs on violence prevention, de-escalation techniques, and self-defense strategies for emergency nurses (Greenwood-Ericksen, 2019). Additionally, emergency departments should have security measures in place, such as panic buttons, security personnel, and surveillance cameras, to ensure the safety of healthcare providers.

4.3.4 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on emergency nursing practice

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on emergency nursing practice, presenting new challenges and changing the way emergency nurses deliver care. The pandemic has led to an influx of patients with COVID-19 symptoms, increased demand for critical care services, and the need for rapid response and adaptation to evolving guidelines and protocols (Hamric, 2013).

Studies have shown that emergency nurses have experienced heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic (Leidi, 2020). The fear of contracting the virus, the uncertainty surrounding treatment and transmission, and the emotional toll of witnessing patient suffering have all contributed to the mental health burden on emergency nurses.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also stressed the significance of infection control measures, personal protective equipment (PPE) availability, and disaster preparedness in the emergency department (Mayglothling, 2010). Emergency nurses have had to quickly adapt to new protocols for triaging patients, implementing isolation precautions, and managing surges in patient volumes while ensuring their colleagues' and their safety (Molloy, 2020).

Moving forward, healthcare organizations must prioritize the mental health and well-being of emergency nurses by offering support services, resilience training, and opportunities for peer debriefing and emotional support. Additionally, ongoing education on infectious disease management, pandemic response, and crisis communication can help emergency nurses feel more confident and prepared to navigate future public health emergencies (Moldovan, 2018).

4.4 Strategies to Address Challenges and Enhance Emergency Nursing Practice

4.4.1 Resilience and Well-being Programs

The results of this review suggest that the implementation of resilience and well-being programs can significantly enhance emergency nursing practice (Roney, 2019). By providing nurses with tools and strategies to cope with high-stress situations, these programs can help prevent burnout, increase job satisfaction, and improve overall well-being. Sole (2020) found that participation in a mindfulness-based resilience training program reduced stress levels and improved emotional regulation among emergency nurses. This supports the importance of offering resilience and well-being programs in emergency nursing practice.

Additionally, a study by Risling (2017) showed that resilience training can increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover among nurses. By promoting a culture of self-care and resilience, healthcare organizations can support their emergency nurses in managing the challenges they face on a daily basis. This highlights the need for continued investment in resilience and well-being programs to enhance emergency nursing practice.

4.4.2 Training and Education

Training and education are crucial factors in addressing challenges and enhancing emergency nursing practice. Findings from this study suggest that ongoing training in areas such as trauma care, critical thinking, and communication skills can improve the quality of care provided by emergency nurses. For instance, a study by Molloy (2020) found that simulation-based training improved nurses' critical thinking skills and preparedness for managing complex emergency situations. By investing in comprehensive training programs, healthcare administrations can guarantee that their emergency nurses are armed with the essential information and abilities to convey high-grade care.

Furthermore, continuing education opportunities can also enhance emergency nursing practice by keeping nurses updated on the latest evidence-based practices and guidelines. A study by Ludin (2018) demonstrated that nurses who participated in regular educational

programs had higher job satisfaction and felt more confident in their abilities. This highlights the importance of providing ongoing training and education to support the professional development of emergency nurses.

4.4.3 Workplace Safety Protocols

Workplace safety protocols are essential in ensuring the well-being of emergency nurses and creating a safe work environment. Findings from this study indicate that implementing effective safety protocols, such as violence prevention programs and ergonomic assessments, can help reduce the risk of workplace injuries and incidents. Hamric (2013) showed that the implementation of a violence prevention program led to a decrease in incidents of workplace violence against emergency nurses. Moreover, ergonomic assessments can help identify and address potential hazards in the workplace, such as lifting and repetitive motion injuries. By advocating for policy changes to support emergency nursing practice

4.4.4 Advocating for Policy Changes

Advocating for policy changes at both the organizational and legislative levels is crucial in supporting emergency nursing practice and addressing systemic challenges. The findings of this study highlight the importance of advocating for policies that prioritize the safety, well-being, and professional development of emergency nurses (Cowen, 2010). For example, advocating for mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios in emergency departments can help ensure that nurses are not overwhelmed with high patient loads, ultimately improving patient outcomes and nurse satisfaction.

Additionally, advocating for policies that address workplace violence and harassment can create a safer and more supportive work environment for emergency nurses. A study by Boltz (2013) found that nurses who felt supported by their organizations in reporting incidents of workplace violence were more likely to seek help and feel empowered to address these challenges. This underscores the importance of advocating for policies that protect emergency nurses from workplace hazards and promote a culture of safety and respect.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, emergency nursing is a critical specialty within the healthcare field that plays a vital role in providing rapid and effective care to patients in emergency situations. The review of current trends and challenges in emergency nursing practice has highlighted a number of key areas that are shaping the future of the profession, including advancements in technology, the evolving role of the emergency nurse, and the increasing focus on quality and safety.

Despite these positive trends, there are also a number of challenges that emergency nurses face, including high patient acuity levels, staffing shortages, and the need for ongoing education and training. Addressing these issues will be vital to ensuring that emergency nurses are able to deliver the greatest care to patients in the fast-paced and high-pressure environment of the emergency department.

Moving forward, it will be essential for healthcare organizations to continue to invest in training and resources for emergency nurses, as well as to support research and innovation in the field. By working together to address these challenges and embrace emerging trends in emergency nursing practice, we can ensure that emergency nurses are well-equipped to meet the requirements of patients and deliver high-quality care in even the most challenging of circumstances.

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