

## **Professional, Ethical and Legal aspects of critical care nurses' competencies: the views of nurses of Critical Care Unit in Nicosia General Hospital**

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**BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES:** This paper is a part of a qualitative research, performed in CCU of Nicosia General Hospital, aiming to explore critical care nurses' views concerning the expected competencies of critical care nurses with postgraduate education in critical care. Competency is defined as a level of performance demonstrating the effective application of knowledge, skill and judgement (ICN 1997, Benner 1982) and the incorporation of attitudes and values (ICN 1997, Boss 1985). Research findings in the area of critical care suggest that professional responsibility, patient safety and ethical conduct are deemed most important in terms of competency development, for all the levels of educational preparation. Professional and regulatory bodies' positions are consistent to the notion that critical care teaching programmes are integral to the development of competent and safe practice in the specialty. International Council of Nurses developed the ICN Framework for competencies for specialist nurse (2008) which focuses on three domains of competencies:

1. Professional, Ethical and Legal Practice
2. Care Provision and Management
3. Professional, Personal and Quality Development

The aim of this presentation is to provide an insight of professional, ethical and legal aspects of critical care nurses' competencies and enable the audience to reflect on the extend of professional accountability and the value of maintaining and improving competence in Nursing.

**METHODS:** Four different focus groups performed with 24 participants, 18 clinical critical care nurses and 6 educators. Few selected focus groups participants were also interviewed. Emerging themes identified by two persons separately. Content analysis was done according to Miles and Huberman (1994). ICN framework of competencies for specialist nurse (2008) formed the basis for analysis and project findings presentation and nevertheless, a benchmarking

**RESULTS:** Accountability, ethical decision making, advocacy and legal practice were identified. Critical care nurses are expected to: Demonstrate accountability through decision making process, competency and integrity and through actions and accurate documentation. Maintain increase responsibility and accountability when accept or delegate care. Respect dignity at all circumstances, support patient and family through decision making and protect the rights of individual and groups.

**CONCLUSION:** Curriculum philosophy should focus on the critical care nurse as a reflective, lifelong and collaborative learner. Curriculum and Continuing Education should include strategies for improving nurses' knowledge and judgment on professional, ethical and legal issues related to their role and strategies for personal development and attitudes improvement.