

## Nursing Assistant Engagement in Early Rehabilitation for Critically Ill Patients

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**Introduction.** Early rehabilitation of critically ill patients is crucial to reduce health care costs, avoid prolonged stay at hospital and minimise impairment of physical functioning and quality of life post hospitalisation. For best possible results, a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team and appropriate intensity of rehabilitation according to patient's health is needed. Nurses and nursing assistants must be involved auxiliary to the rest rehabilitation team, for cost effective and rational health care.

**Aim, Materials and Methods.** The aim of this study is to compare notion of nursing assistant's engagement in early patient's rehabilitation between nursing assistants, head nurses and specialised rehabilitation team members.

A questionnaire with 10 early rehabilitation activities was handed out to nursing assistants. One of the three aligned alternatives were chosen by nursing assistant according to one's experience in frequency of performing the task. Questionnaires with identical activities were handed out to other participants, to choose according to one's observations if tasks are performed sufficiently by nursing assistants or not.

**Results.** In total, 50 nursing assistants, 17 head nurses and 13 specialised rehabilitation team members took part in this study. Out of 50 nursing assistants, 49 were women with mean age of 53 years.

Thirty-three nursing assistants marked that they have performed all 10 tasks. Nine out of them have performed all of the tasks during the previous week. On the other hand, seven head nurses and one rehabilitation specialist considered all tasks being performed sufficiently. All nursing assistants marked that they have assisted the patient to get dressed and transfer into a seated position, 11 out of them marked that it has been performed during the previous week.

Only one head nurse considers these activities being performed insufficiently, eight rehabilitation specialists consider that assisting a patient to transfer to a sitting position is performed insufficiently and only two consider assisting getting dressed being performed insufficiently. To assist a patient to stand upright and encourage to walk independently was marked by 15 nursing assistants to have been performed over the period of the previous week.

However, seven head nurses and nine rehabilitation specialists consider encouragement being performed insufficiently, also two head nurses and ten rehabilitation specialists consider assisting to stand up straight being performed insufficiently. All head nurses consider that assisting a patient to sit in bed for a meal is done sufficiently, whilst 11 rehabilitation specialists and nine head nurses marked that assisting a nurse in passive mobilisation of a patient is performed insufficiently.

**Conclusion.** The results show that activities performed by all nursing assistants include assisting a patient to get dressed and transfer to a sitting position. Nursing assistants most regularly assist patients to an upright position and encourage them to walk independently. Head nurses and rehabilitation specialists consider at least half of the tasks being performed sufficiently by nursing assistants. Nursing assistants actively participate in early rehabilitation of critically ill patients, but a lesser part of them do it regularly. Most critical in evaluating nursing assistants' work are specialised rehabilitation team members.