

Experiences of Nursing Conscious Heart Failure Patients Receiving Intra Aortic Balloon Pump Therapy

Bateson M, Kennedy S

Purpose:

In advanced stages of heart failure people may require mechanical circulatory support, such as IABP, in order to survive. IABP therapy is intensive and restrictive for patients and requires skilled nursing (Reid and Cottrell 2005). Literature on the nursing care of people receiving IABP therapy is sparse with a focus on technical aspects.

Aim:

- To explore nurses' experiences of caring for conscious patients receiving intra-aortic balloon pump (IABP) therapy for heart failure out with critical care.
- To describe nurses' perceptions of the conscious patient's experience of receiving IABP therapy.

Methods:

- Design:** Qualitative descriptive
- Study site:** Ward in Scottish tertiary hospital caring for conscious patients receiving IABP therapy for heart failure.
- Sample:** Convenience sample (n=7) of registered nurses who had cared for persons receiving IABP therapy at the study site in the previous 12 months.
- Data Collection:** A pilot study (n=2) was undertaken prior to main data collection. Written informed consent obtained. Audio-taped one to one semi-structured interviews were undertaken.
- Data Analysis:** Data were transcribed verbatim and content analysed.

Findings

All participants were female and all reported caring for patients receiving IABP therapy at least once per month. Three themes were identified.

The Impact of Education and Organisational Issues on Service Delivery

Participants reported a conscious incompetence when first caring for patients receiving IABP therapy.

"one wrong move and you could kill the patient... it was very scary when I was first looking after them"

This fear was overcome through education and supported experience.

Delivering Nursing Care

Although participants recognised the general importance of technical competence, general nursing care was prioritised by participants.

"They are completely dependent on you. You have to pretty much do everything for them"

The restrictions of IABP therapy and their consequences were of particular concern.

"the muscles in their legs just go to nothing. We've had quite a few patients who really really struggled when they first get up"

The role of the physiotherapist emphasised in prevention and rehabilitation. The role of the nurse was less well defined.

IABP: A Double Edged Sword

For many patients IABP therapy was an unpleasant but unavoidable means to an end, representing hope for survival.

"usually they're told, you're really sick, you need a balloon pump and if you don't, well you're going to die"

Despite the restrictions and potentially long duration of therapy patients were perceived to generally tolerate IABP therapy well. This was linked with a lack of other treatment options. Participants associated the development of this tolerance with the establishment of coping strategies such as routines.

"probably the ones that coped best on it are the ones that started getting a routine into their day...set a routine to the day to basically get them through"

Conclusions

Delivering excellent nursing care was the key focus of the participants in this study. Participants more easily described the physical impact and care of IABP therapy than emotional aspects. To improve upon this, education around emotional needs of IABP is required. Furthermore, research into the patient experience of IABP therapy is essential to underpin person centred nursing.

References

Reid, Cottrell (2005) Nursing care of patients receiving Intra-aortic Balloon Counterpulsation Critical Care Nurse Vol 25 pp 40-49

Authors:

Meghan Bateson (MSc, BN (Hons), RN, SPQ) Staff nurse, Intensive Care, Golden Jubilee National Hospital, Clydebank, Scotland
Susan Kennedy (MSc, RGN, DN) BHF Cardiovascular Care Lecturer, Nursing & Health Care, University of Glasgow
 Contact: m.bateson@nhs.net