Cardiology intensive care unit nurse in Italy: definition of advanced competences.

IN-CORE study

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Background/Introduction: Since the establishment of the Cardiology Intensive Care Units to date, there have been many scientific and technological progresses that have involved not only the pathways of diagnosis and treatment of patients in this specialist area, but also the specialist competencies that nurses must acquire in order to work in these settings. The epidemiological picture and incidence of comorbidities suggest the care of patients requiring intensive and specialised care, with the use of high technology and circulatory support systems, changing the usual setting of a cardiology intensive care unit to a high-intensity cardiology intensive care unit. To date, a few studies have been described in the literature that have mapped the competences of the cardiology intensive care unit nurse, but the heterogeneity of training education at a European level has not yet made a reference framework for this specialist area generalisable. (Endacott R., et al. 2022). In Italy, there are no specific postgraduate courses focused on specialist cardiac intensive care skills development for nurses. To develop such courses, content incorporating appropriate competencies is required and this study was designed to meet this.

Purpose: To identify the core competencies of nurses working in High-intensity cardiology intensive care units (ICUs) in Italy to develop national competence framework.

Methods: A three-round e-Delphi study was conducted with a group of 30 experienced cardiac intensive care unit nurses; 28 completed all three rounds. The first round asked each participant to write down five competences, which they were asked to prioritize in the second round. In the third round, they were asked to prioritize again, considering the scores made in the second round. The final list of competencies was the one that achieved a greater than 70% agreement among the participants.

Results: We identified 12 core competencies that include a few competence areas, including high-tech care, emergency management, teamwork, and critical decision-making. Only slight differences emerged among the panel of experts regarding the priority given to certain core competencies, such as ECG reading, emergency management and technical and practical skills in the intensive care area.

Conclusions: This is the first study in Italy to identify the core and advanced competencies of nurses working in high level cardiac intensive care units. This study provides an important basis for the development of postgraduate educational programme and a framework for the definition of national standards to be implemented in clinical practice.