

Title:

Nursing Care of Older People in Emergency:
The Nursing COPE Study.

Name:

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PhD Thesis:

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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KEY TO TRANSCRIPTIONS

The following abbreviations and conventions have been used throughout the thesis, where excerpts from the participants' transcriptions have been used.

... indicates a pause contained in the original material.

...//... material edited from the original for clarity

Bold indicates words, phrase, or sentence relevant to the theme(s) or narrative(s)

ABBREVIATIONS

ED	Emergency Department
RN	Registered nurse
OPACs	Older Person Acute Care Survey
ASET	Aged Care Services Emergency Team
CENA	College of Nurses Australasia
MNCLHD	Mid North Coast Local Health District
FoAQ	Facts of Ageing Quiz

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To my wonderful mum, thank you for everything and for having faith in me.

To my friends, thank you for listening and for not letting me quit.

SYNOPSIS

This study is titled 'Nursing **C**are of the **O**lder **P**erson in **E**mergency' (C.O.P.E). This study sought to answer the question: "How does nurses' knowledge of ageing and attitudes towards older persons influence clinical practice and therapeutic interactions in Emergency Department settings?"

Older patients constitute an increasing number of presentations to Australian emergency departments (ED); and the nurses employed in the EDs specialise in trauma, and may have no or little experience with the specialised care required for the older person's chronic and complex care needs. The ED's fast-paced environment is inconsistent with older people's chronic and complex needs, and can impact on both the ED nurse and older patient.

This study explored nurses' knowledge and understanding of the ageing process and their attitudes towards the older person; and the impact on their clinical practices and therapeutic interactions in emergency department settings. A person-centred care framework was used as the conceptual framework for the study. A mixed methods approach was used in the study and included two phases. Phase one incorporated a survey that was distributed to all of the members (n=973) of the College of Emergency Nursing Australasia (CENA). Phase two of the study involved semi-structured interviews with fourteen emergency nurses at two regional hospitals in Australia.

The findings of the survey suggested that ED nurses had a basic knowledge of the ageing process and related care issues. The findings of the qualitative interview with nurses revealed many issues that mitigate the provision of person centred care in the ED setting. The attitude towards the older person in both phases were variable with the interview data revealing ageist attitudes that were not revealed in the survey.

In conclusion, ED nurses' negative attitudes and inadequate knowledge about ageing can lead to poor clinical practice and an increase in adverse events for older people. This study indicates that ED nurses need to be equipped with appropriate attitudes and knowledge that will support older patients' health care decisions and needs. If the ED nurse can recognise the unique needs of the older person, then discrimination and marginalisation of the older person can be prevented, and person centred care can be achieved in the ED setting.

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