The nurses’ experience of receiving nursing care as a patient in an acute general hospital

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other University or institution.

Shirley Graham
Abstract

This phenomenological study describes what it is like for the nurse to be a patient receiving nursing care in an acute general hospital and relates the understanding gained from this description to implications for health care practice and nursing education. The participants in this study were 45 nurses from all around Australia who had been patients in an acute general hospital for two days or more within the five years prior to the study commencement. Thirty-seven nurses consented to be interviewed either face to face or by telephone and eight nurses submitted their personal account by letter or email.

The experience of the layperson receiving nursing care whilst in hospital has been widely explored. Findings from several studies suggest that while lay people often have positive experiences of receiving nursing care and hospitalisation they also have negative ones (Morse, 1991; Walker, 2001). The negative experiences of hospitalised patients are of global concern and have seen the implementation of many changes to health care services and delivery (WHO, 2008). Anecdotally, many professional nurses who have been hospitalised as patients have expressed concerns about their experiences of being on the other side of the hospital bed. Many of those concerns resonate with those of the layperson but there is a paucity of research available on this topic.

The participants’ narratives representing their experience of being a patient receiving nursing care in an acute general hospital are presented in this study. To answer the question, “what is the nurses’ experience as a patient receiving nursing care in an acute general hospital” I used Giorgi’s (2009) phenomenological approach, which is guided by Husserl.

The findings of this study show that for the participants, being a nurse was an integral part of their personal identity. It was how they defined themselves within the milieu of the hospital setting. Being a nurse was how they saw the world; it was how they thought about and responded to the world and how they felt. Participants could not stop being a nurse. Even when they attempted to leave their nursing behind them and be a patient they thought and acted as a nurse would, thus their nursing knowledge and expectations were a part of their experience. Essentially, being a nurse represented their embodied self. Being a nurse and a patient receiving nursing care in this study incorporates “Becoming ill”, “Knowing and being afraid”, “Being a fly on the wall”, “Being discovered”, “Being a nurse”, “Being objectified”, “Being vigilant” and “Being cared for or not by a nurse”.

The findings of this study add to the body of knowledge about the experience of being a nurse and a patient receiving nursing care. In addition the findings also have implications for the nurse to nurse patient relationship in the provision of nursing care to this group of patients.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all of the nurse participants who gave so generously of their time and experiences. Without your contribution the nurse as patients’ voice would not be heard. Your stories inspired and motivated me to keep on with the study.

Thanks are due to my supervisors, Professors Diana Keatinge and Isabel Higgins for all of your time, effort and energies in helping me to develop my writing and critical thinking skills to this level. Thank you especially for your continuing encouragement over the years.

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<td>Participants</td>
<td>Participants are nurses who are patients and for continuity and clarity are mainly described as participants but may on occasion be described as nurse patients.</td>
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