

Nurses' experience of body nursing care: a qualitative study

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Background. Nursing as a practice is founded on caring for the human body¹. Nursing work has been historically and culturally conceived as 'bodywork'², that is, 'a work that focuses directly on the bodies of others'³. However, international nursing studies conducted on the topic of body care primarily include theoretical studies, whereas empirical studies remain sparse^{1,4}.

Aim. To describe nurses' perceptions of the role of their bodies, and the bodies of patients during body care.

Method. A descriptive phenomenological study based on Husserl's philosophical perspective. A purposive sample of Italian registered nurses representing the highest level of nursing education, different clinical experience levels and different clinical specialties were interviewed. Data were collected between July 2015 and September 2015. Open-ended interviews were analysed using Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method. Lincoln and Guba's strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

Results. The study included 11 Italian nurses (Table 1). Their ages ranged from 31 to 46 years, and their clinical experience ranged from 1 to 26 years. The analysis yielded one overarching theme, four themes and thirteen subthemes (Table 2). 'Body care is the heart of nursing' was overarching theme and four major themes were (1) 'Body care seizes the essence of person', (2) 'Body care touches the heart of person', (3) 'The body generates opposite strategies of care', and (4) 'In time, the body "nourishes" the helping relationship'.

Code	Gender	Age (years)	Education	Clinical experience (years)	Main clinical setting of practice
N1	Female	39	PhD	16	Oncology
N2	Female	38	PhD student (2° year)	20	Community
N3	Male	34	PhD student (3° year)	11	Psychiatry
N4	Male	38	PhD	10	Surgery
N5	Female	46	PhD student (3° year)	25	Oncology
N6	Male	43	PhD	20	Sub intensive care
N7	Female	39	PhD student (3° year)	16	Palliative care
N8	Female	31	PhD student (2° year)	1	Geriatrics
N9	Female	30	PhD student (2° year)	7	Emergency
N10	Female	45	PhD student (1° year)	26	Medicine
N11	Female	46	PhD student (1° year)	23	Oncology

Table 1. Participants' characteristic

Could you please tell me what you think and know about the body and embodiment in nursing care?

Could you please describe the first time you took care of a patient's body?

Could you please tell me how you live the contact with a patient's body?

What are your emotions and moods?

Could you please tell me about the problems you encounter during body care?

What helps you manage potential difficulties?

Image 1. Questions' interview

Conclusions. Nurses considered body and embodiment concepts central to nursing. Body care is treated as an experience with extraordinary emotional contents, allowing nurses to discover the essentials of human nature. In nursing education, it is necessary to reposition the place of *body* and *embodiment* concepts to develop the knowledge base for professional competence. Moreover, it is necessary to identify the educational strategies and reflective practices that can promote nurses in their ability to provide more sensitive and knowledgeable care.

References

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Overarching theme	Body care is the heart of nursing
Themes	1. Body care seizes the essence of person
Subthemes	1.1 Body care originates from basic needs 1.2 Distinguishing between body and embodiment concepts is difficult 1.3 The body manifests the person
	2. Body care touches the heart of person
	2.1 Body care generates negative sensations 2.2 Body care generates more negative emotions than positive 2.3 Body care generates more positive feelings than negative
	3. The body generates contrasting care strategies
	3.1 Body care is difficult 3.2 The body is avoided 3.3 Body care requires a relationship that goes beyond the technique
	4. In time, the body 'nourishes' the helping relationship
	4.1 The body is communication 4.2 The contact goes beyond the physical barrier 4.3 The body 'teaches' 4.4 Care is mediated by time

Table 2. Themes and subthemes