An exploration of the moral experience of intensive care nurses in providing end-of-life care: an interpretative description study

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Introduction
It has been well acknowledged that many ICU nurses tend to take pride in their expertise to save lives and view death as a failure in their treatment and care. Moral distress occurs when a nurse knows the ethically correct action to take but feels powerless to take that action. As a result, end-of-life care provided to patients and their families is one of the most important challenges facing the ICU nurses.

Objectives
The objective of this study is to explore nurses’ moral experience of providing end-of-life care for dying patients in ICU.

Methodology
This is a qualitative study with five group interviews based on Interpretative Description Methodology. Data collection comprised of group interviews with eighteen intensive care nurses. The analytic method of constant comparison, informed by grounded theory methodology, allowed for the identification of commonalities across the nurses’ experiences.

Result
Four themes were identified during the analysis. (1) examination of self awareness and attitudes toward quality end-of-life care in intensive care environment; (2) the care provided goes beyond the direct care providing to the dying patients and the families; (3) acknowledging and confronting the personal limits and moral distress related to the provision of futile care (4) recognition of how the ward’s ideology and culture and peer support shape the experience in providing end-of-life care.