NURSING INTERVENTIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON REDUCING SEPSIS MORTALITY.

Sami Hadi Jamil[1*], Sahar Owaid Alshammari[2], Munayfah Oudah Aldhafeeri[3], Afaf Matir Aldhafeeri[3], Meshari Abdullah Alshammari[4], Ahmed Dhahawi ALanzi[4], Amnah Mohammed Mahnashi[5], Mohammad Bayoudh, Althiabi[6], Ranin Ali Bati[7], Sukainah Hussein Al Obeidi[8]

Abstract

This review article synthesizes current literature on nursing interventions and their impact on reducing sepsis mortality. Sepsis remains a global health challenge, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of nursing strategies to enhance patient outcomes. The review encompasses studies from diverse sources, including PubMed, Web of Science, and Cochrane, focusing on interventions implemented by nurses in sepsis management. Key interventions explored include early recognition, timely administration of antibiotics, fluid resuscitation, vasopressor therapy, and continuous monitoring. The critical role of nurses in initiating these interventions is emphasized, illustrating their pivotal position in the frontline of sepsis care. The article delves into the nuanced aspects of nursing contributions, such as patient and family education, emotional support, and post-acute care. By thoroughly analyzing the literature, this review aims to provide evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of nursing interventions, elucidating their direct impact on reducing sepsis-related mortality. The synthesis of findings seeks to inform healthcare practices, foster continuous improvement in nursing care protocols, and guide future research directions to further enhance sepsis management strategies. Ultimately, the comprehensive understanding offered in this review underscores the indispensable role of nurses in mitigating sepsis mortality and promoting holistic patient care.

Keywords: Sepsis, nurses, mortality, management, strategies

[1*]Qaryat Bish Primary Healthcare Center, Ministry of Health, Bish, Saudi Arabia
[2] Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Maternity and Children Hospital, Rafha, Saudi Arabia
[3] Hafr Al-Batin Primary Health Care, As Sufyari Primary Healthcare Center, Hafr Al-Batin, Saudi Arabia
[4] Nursing Department, Al Uwayqilah Hospital, Al Uwayqilah, Saudi Arabia
[5] Alsharqyiah Primary Healthcare Center, Taif Primary Health Care, Taif, Saudi Arabia
[6] Nursing Department, Umdom General Hospital, Taif, Saudi Arabia
[7] Nursing Department, Al Noor Specialist Hospital, Mecca, Saudi Arabia
[8] Nursing Department, Anak General Hospital, Qatif, Saudi Arabia

[*]**Corresponding Author:** Sami Hadi Jamil,
[*]Qaryat Bish Primary Healthcare Center, Ministry of Health, Bish, Saudi Arabia.
Email: ahat9669@hotmail.com

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Introduction

Sepsis is a complex and potentially life-threatening condition that arises when the body's response to infection becomes dysregulated, leading to a systemic inflammatory response (1). The primary cause of sepsis is an infection, which can originate from bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. Common sources of infection include respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, abdominal infections, and skin infections (2). When the immune system responds to an infection, it releases chemicals into the bloodstream to combat the invading pathogens. In sepsis, this immune response goes awry, triggering widespread inflammation that can lead to organ dysfunction and failure. The body's attempts to fight the infection result in a cascade of events, including the release of inflammatory mediators, blood clotting abnormalities, and impaired blood flow (3). Risk factors for sepsis include age extremes (very young or elderly), weakened immune systems, chronic medical conditions, invasive medical procedures, and the use of immunosuppressive medications (1). Early recognition of sepsis is crucial for effective treatment, as delayed intervention can lead to a rapid deterioration of the patient's condition (4). The symptoms of sepsis include fever, rapid heart rate, altered mental status, difficulty breathing, and low blood pressure (5). Despite advancements in medical knowledge and treatment, sepsis remains a significant global health concern, emphasizing the importance of ongoing research, education, and preventive measures to reduce its incidence and improve outcomes for those affected by this critical condition.

Globally, approximately 11 million deaths occur due to sepsis in a year. This estimate accounts for almost 20% of all global deaths (6). The Centers for Disease Control quotes that at least 1.7 million individuals in the United States develop sepsis within a year, out of which 350,000 die (7). Multiple sources from the literature have observed that the trends of sepsis incidence and mortality are worse in low-middle-income countries (LMICs) (8, 9). The highest incidence and sepsis-related mortality were noted in sub-Saharan Africa, south Asia, east Asia, and Southeast Asia (10).

Reducing sepsis-related mortality requires a multifaceted approach involving timely recognition, aggressive management, and ongoing efforts to enhance healthcare systems (11). Clinical interventions play a pivotal role in mitigating sepsis mortality. Early identification and rapid initiation of treatment are critical. Additionally, implementing sepsis screening tools in hospitals and healthcare facilities can aid in the early recognition of potential cases. Furthermore, establishing standardized protocols for sepsis management, including timely administration of antibiotics and fluid resuscitation, is essential (12). The integration of technology is increasingly valuable in sepsis management. Automated alerts and decision support systems within EHRs can assist healthcare providers in identifying and managing sepsis cases promptly (13). Healthcare providers, particularly nurses play a pivotal role in the reduction of sepsis-related mortality through their involvement in various aspects of patient care. Firstly, early recognition of sepsis symptoms is crucial, and nurses are often the first healthcare professionals to assess and monitor patients. Their vigilance in identifying signs such as fever, altered mental status, and abnormal vital signs are instrumental in initiating timely interventions (14). Nurses are actively engaged in implementing sepsis screening tools, facilitating prompt diagnosis, and ensuring that patients receive timely medical attention (15). Additionally, nurses are at the forefront of administering prescribed treatments, including timely administration of antibiotics and fluid resuscitation, critical components in sepsis management. Continuous monitoring of patient's responses to interventions, such as tracking vital signs and laboratory results, allows nurses to promptly identify any deterioration and collaborate with the healthcare team to adjust treatment plans accordingly (16). Their role extends to fostering a holistic approach to care that can positively impact patient outcomes in the challenging context of sepsis. The active involvement of nurses in early recognition, intervention, and ongoing patient care significantly contributes to the overall reduction of sepsis-related mortality.

The study aims to investigate the impact of specific nursing interventions on reducing sepsis-related mortality, recognizing the critical role nurses play in the early identification and management of sepsis. The rationale for this study lies in the potential to fill existing gaps in the literature regarding the direct correlation between nursing interventions and sepsis mortality reduction. By examining the implementation of early recognition strategies, timely administration of antibiotics, fluid resuscitation, continuous monitoring, and patient education by nurses, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of these interventions. Moreover, the study's findings may inform educational programs for nurses, emphasizing the importance of their roles in sepsis care. Ultimately, this research seeks to advance the field of nursing science by providing empirical evidence supporting the significance of nursing interventions in reducing sepsis-related mortality, thereby enhancing the quality of patient

care, and contributing to the global efforts to mitigate the impact of sepsis on public health.

Methods

Commencing on February 1st, 2023, this research initiative was initiated following a meticulous examination of existing scholarly literature. A thorough literature review was conducted using various databases, including PubMed, Web of Science, and Cochrane. The search strategy incorporated diverse combinations of medical terminology, supplemented by manual searches on Google Scholar to identify relevant research terms. The primary focus of this literature review was on understanding the causes and mortality associated with sepsis, along with interventions aimed at mitigating its adverse impact. Furthermore, the review explored the role of nurses and their specific interventions in reducing sepsis mortality and managing the condition. It is essential to underscore that the articles chosen for inclusion in this study adhered to multiple criteria, ensuring a comprehensive and robust review process.

Discussion

Preventive interventions for sepsis

Nurses play a crucial role in implementing preventive strategies aimed at reducing sepsis-related mortality, emphasizing a proactive approach to patient care. One fundamental strategy is early recognition and assessment. Studies indicate that nurses are often the first healthcare professionals to interact with patients, making their ability to recognize early signs of infection and sepsis paramount (17). Regular training and education programs ensure that nurses stay vigilant, promptly identifying symptoms such as fever, elevated heart rate, and altered mental status. This early recognition allows for swift intervention, increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes (18).

Another key preventive strategy lies in infection prevention measures. Nurses are at the forefront of implementing and reinforcing stringent infection control practices, including proper hand hygiene, aseptic techniques, and adherence to isolation protocols. Evidence suggests that by minimizing the risk of infections, nurses contribute significantly to preventing the development of sepsis in vulnerable patient populations (19, 20).

Additionally, health education is a powerful tool in sepsis prevention, and nurses play a pivotal role in patient and caregiver education. Informing patients and their families about the signs and symptoms of infections, the importance of timely medical attention, and adherence to prescribed medications can empower them to actively participate in their care (21). Nurses also educate patients with chronic conditions on managing their health to prevent infections that may lead to sepsis (22). Vaccination advocacy is another vital aspect of preventive care led by nurses. Ensuring that eligible patients receive vaccinations against common infections, such as influenza and pneumonia, reduces the likelihood of these infections progressing to sepsis. Nurses assess vaccination status, provide information, and facilitate vaccination clinics to enhance community immunity (23).

Timely administration of prophylactic antibiotics is another preventive strategy employed by nurses in specific clinical settings. Literature suggests that in surgical and medical procedures with an increased risk of infection, nurses collaborate with healthcare teams to administer antibiotics preoperatively or as prophylaxis, reducing the likelihood of postoperative infections that could lead to sepsis (17). Furthermore, ongoing patient monitoring is integral to sepsis prevention. Nurses are supposed to regularly assess vital signs, laboratory values, and clinical indicators to identify subtle changes that may indicate an evolving infection. This vigilant monitoring allows for early intervention, preventing the progression of severe sepsis or septic shock (24). Collaboration and communication within the healthcare team are essential preventive strategies. Nurses actively participate in interdisciplinary rounds, sharing critical information about patients at risk for sepsis. Clear communication ensures timely adjustments to treatment plans and facilitates a cohesive approach to patient care (18). Nurses also contribute to quality improvement initiatives focused on sepsis prevention. Participating in audits, analyzing data, and implementing evidence-based practices help identify areas for improvement in sepsis prevention protocols. This continuous feedback loop allows healthcare institutions to refine and optimize their preventive strategies (25).

Sepsis prevention is paramount in reducing sepsis-related mortality, and nurses play a pivotal role in implementing preventive measures. By implementing these measures, nurses not only contribute to reducing the incidence of sepsis but also ensure timely intervention, improving patient outcomes and ultimately lowering sepsis-related mortality rates.

Sepsis management strategies

Sepsis management by nurses is a multifaceted process that involves a combination of early recognition, prompt intervention, and ongoing monitoring to reduce sepsis-related mortality. Nurses play a pivotal role in implementing strategies that span from the initial identification of sepsis symptoms to the administration of life-saving interventions. One critical aspect is the early

recognition of sepsis signs, where nurses are at the forefront of assessing patients for potential indicators such as fever, elevated heart rate, and altered mental status (16). Their vigilance enables timely identification, triggering a cascade of interventions (15).

According to the literature, management strategies involving best care, timely administration of antibiotics, resuscitation through fluids, and other evidence-based therapies can significantly contribute to the reduction of sepsis-related mortality. Timely administration of antibiotics is a cornerstone of sepsis management. Nurses collaborate closely with healthcare providers to ensure the prompt initiation of appropriate antibiotics based on the suspected or identified source of infection. This timely intervention is vital in halting the progression of the infection and mitigating the systemic inflammatory response associated with sepsis (26).

Fluid resuscitation stands as a cornerstone in the intricate landscape of sepsis management, and nurses play an instrumental role in executing this pivotal intervention. Administering intravenous fluids is a primary responsibility of nurses in sepsis care, aiming to restore and maintain adequate tissue perfusion (27). The dynamic nature of sepsis underscores the importance of vigilant monitoring of patients' fluid status, and nurses assume a crucial role in this process. They continuously assess responsiveness to fluid resuscitation, closely observing the patient's hemodynamic parameters and adjusting the treatment plan accordingly (28). This adaptive approach ensures that the patient receives an optimal balance of fluids tailored to their specific needs, preventing both under-resuscitation and fluid overload. In instances where fluid resuscitation alone proves insufficient to maintain blood pressure and organ perfusion, vasopressor therapy becomes a necessary adjunct. Nurses closely monitor hemodynamic parameters such as blood pressure, heart rate, and urine output. Administering vasopressors as prescribed, they navigate the delicate balance required to restore perfusion without inducing adverse effects (29). This intricate task demands astute clinical judgment, as nurses must assess the patient's response to vasopressors and make real-time adjustments to maintain hemodynamic stability (30). Addressing sepsis-induced hypoxia is equally crucial, and nurses undertake a central role in oxygen therapy. They assess and manage the patient's respiratory status, ensuring adequate ventilation and oxygenation. Administering supplemental oxygen as needed, nurses continuously monitor oxygen saturation levels through pulse oximetry. This diligent oversight aims to optimize tissue oxygenation, mitigating the detrimental effects of hypoxia on vital organs (31). According to the literature, the involvement of nurses in these aspects of sepsis management extends beyond the administration of interventions. It encompasses a holistic approach that considers individual patient responses, the dynamic nature of sepsis, and potential complications. Through their expertise and continuous monitoring, nurses contribute significantly to achieving the delicate balance required for successful fluid resuscitation, vasopressor therapy, and oxygen administration in septic patients, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of sepsis management and improving patient outcomes (32, 33).

Continuous monitoring is again an essential component of effective sepsis management, with nurses serving as vigilant custodians of patient well-being. Systematically observing vital signs, laboratory results, and clinical indicators, nurses are at the forefront of detecting any signs of deterioration promptly. This watchful surveillance is indispensable for the early identification of sepsis-related complications or changes in the patient's condition, facilitating timely interventions that can significantly impact outcomes (26).

In addition to these clinical strategies, the role of emotional support in sepsis management is paramount, often underestimated in its impact (34). Nurses provide empathetic care, addressing not only the physical but also the psychological and emotional needs of patients and their families. This holistic approach contributes to the overall well-being of the patient, fostering a supportive environment that may positively influence the response to treatment. Recognizing the emotional toll of sepsis on both patients and their families, nurses play a crucial role in offering reassurance, empathy, and communication, thereby enhancing the overall patient experience (35, 36). Beyond the acute phase of sepsis, nurses extend their care into post-acute and rehabilitation settings. Monitoring for potential complications, supporting the recovery process, and facilitating the transition from intensive care to general ward settings are integral aspects of the comprehensive approach nurses undertake (37). This continuity of care is essential in addressing the long-term consequences of sepsis, ensuring that patients receive ongoing support and rehabilitation tailored to their individual needs. In this way, nurses play a pivotal role in not only managing the acute crisis of sepsis but also promoting sustained recovery and overall well-being throughout the patient's healthcare journey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, nurses play an indispensable role in the comprehensive management of sepsis, contributing significantly to reducing sepsis-related mortality and improving patient outcomes. From early recognition and timely interventions, including fluid resuscitation and vasopressor therapy, to continuous monitoring and emotional support, nurses form the backbone of effective sepsis care. The multifaceted contributions of nurses throughout the sepsis continuum underscore their pivotal role in navigating the complexities of this life-threatening condition, ultimately making a profound impact on patient well-being, and reducing the burden of sepsis-related mortality.

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