DELIRIUM-RELATED DISTRESS IN HOSPITAL: A SCOPING REVIEW AND CONCEPT ANALYSIS

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KEYWORDS

Delirium; Distress; Carers; Clinicians; Concept Analysis; Hospital; Patients; Scoping Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (100 words maximum)

Delirium is an acute neurocognitive condition, characterised by changes in awareness, attention, and cognition. Delirium is often a distressing experience for patients, carers and hospital staff.
The exact nature and definition of delirium-related distress, or ways to measure it, has not been described in the literature to date. The aim of this scoping review and concept analysis was to present delirium-related distress in terms of its antecedents, attributes, consequences and protective factors.

INTRODUCTION

Delirium is an acute neurocognitive condition arising from medications, infections or hopitalization and characterised by changes in awareness, attention, and cognition. An episode of delirium in hospital increases the risk of complications such as longer stay, falls, cognitive decline, and mortality.
Delirium is often distressing. Patients can feel distressed during the episode, as well as recall the dreams, altered perceptions and behaviours experienced. Delirium can also be distressing for family and friends (’carers’), and hospital staff involved in the patient’s care. There has been minimal synthesis of the research literature on delirium-related distress.
Undertaking a concept analysis of delirium-related distress will build understanding and support the development of a definition, in turn supporting future research to develop assessment methods, outcome measures, and interventions. Futhermore, clinicians will be better informed to respond to patients and carers (and their own) distress.

OBJECTIVES

To review published literature on delirium-related distress, perform concept analysis of included data, and provide foundational evidence for the development of a definition of delirium-related distress.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Antecedents, attributes, consequences, and protective factors are presented.
- Mental health effects are present during and after an episode of delirium.
- There are few tools in place to effectively measure delirium-related distress.

METHODOLOGY/ PROCESS

Eligibility criteria: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods studies were eligible if published since 1980 and focussed on patient, family carer or staff experiences and perceptions of delirium-related distress.
Sources of evidence: Databases searched were MEDLINE, Embase, CINAHL, PsycInfo and Scopus. This search was conducted on 19 June 2023.
Charting methods: A data extraction tool was developed to include aims, methods, demographics and results of each paper, the antecedents, consequences, and attributes of delirium-related distress, protective factors and empirical referents. While not strictly part of the concept analysis method, protective factors were identified and analysed as an important factor to consider in delirium-related distress.
The concept analysis method involves constructing model, borderline, related and contrary cases. Data were summarised and synthesised thematically, thematic statements were developed.

RESULTS/ OUTCOMES

Of the 12,477 titles and abstracts screened, 510 articles were included for full text review, and 54 articles reporting 51 distinct research projects included. Participants included 2771 patients, 1645 family carers and 1505 hospital staff. Themes identified are: safety as a protective factor; the influence of the hopsital environment; mental health effects during and after delirium; and worry about the past and future. Four

empirical referents were identified and their psychometric properties summarised. While attributes were prevalent in the literature, data on antecedents and consequences were lacking.

CONCLUSION

This scoping review and concept analysis synthesised a large body of literature on delirium-related distress. Areas for focus in future research can include identifying antecedents, measures, long-term consequences, and effective interventions for delirium-related distress