Accountability in nursing clinical practice: decision-making analysis in an English emergency department

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Background

- Workload increase in emergency departments
  - Winter pressures
  - Staff shortages
  - Skill–mix issues

- Task prioritisation due to lack of resources
  - Ethical dilemmas
  - Decision–making
  - Legal repercussions
Objective

- Present the main factors that affect legal and ethical accountability in Emergency Nursing in England
Mixed qualitative study

Three data gathering methods:
- Reflections on practice (2014–2016)
- Ethical analysis of 54 applicable policies
- 34 semi–structured interviews to LRI ED nurses

Data evaluated using ethnographic content analysis
Results (I)

Clinical nursing accountability cycle

Accountability concentration

Subjective contractual individual accountability

- Problem relative to a patient
- Option A
- Option B
- Option C
- Option D

Decision-making process

- Healthcare institution
- Resources
- Policies
- Consequences

Clinical intuition

Subjective beneficent knowledge

Nurse

Accountability dispersion

Vicarious hierarchical accountability
Results (II)

Relations amongst clinical nursing accountability factors
Discussion

- Accountability as a subjective concept
- Relation nurse–healthcare institution
- Ethical dichotomy
- Moral judgement of the concrete case
Conclusions

- Nursing accountability and decision-making are dependent on the nurse, the healthcare institution and the context.

- They are regulated by four factors:
  - Legal
  - Ethical
  - Professional
  - Personal

- Due to the current context in ED, legal factors take precedence over other factors.
THANK YOU
For
Listening to my Presentation