

# An Exploratory Study to Review Written Nursing Documentation

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## Background

> Reviews of nursing documentation have often used audit methodology, evaluating the process against pre-determined standards.  
> Less is known about the ways in which the content describes the contribution of nursing to patient care (De Marinis et al, 2010<sup>1</sup>).  
> The aim of this project was to explore the language, content and themes present in clinical nursing documentation.

1. De Marinis, M. G., Piredda, M., Pascarella, M. C., Vincenzi, B., Spiga, F., Tartaglino, D., Alvaro, R. & Matarese, M. (2010) "If it is not recorded, it has not been done!"? consistency between nursing records and observed nursing care in an Italian hospital.' Journal of Clinical Nursing; 19 (11-12) 1544-52. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2702.2009.03012.x.

## Methods

> Content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005<sup>2</sup>) was used to analyse anonymised written nursing records from two in-patient wards between July and October 2016. Nine patient records from each ward were reviewed, each record containing seven consecutive days of nursing documentation.

> An initial thematic framework based on the 'Activities of Daily Living' (Roper, Logan and Tierney, 1980<sup>3</sup>) was developed, three researchers then independently analysed two sets of patient notes to establish a coding consensus, and refine the thematic framework.

> Following the initial coding, and discussion amongst the research team, a finalised thematic framework was agreed upon; coding on a further 16 sets of notes was then conducted by a single researcher using Nvivo QSR v.11.

2. Hsieh, H.F. & Shannon, S.E. (2005) 'Three approaches to qualitative content analysis.' Qualitative Health Research; 15(9) 1277-88. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687.  
3. Roper N., Logan W.W. & Tierney A.J. (1980). The Elements of Nursing. Churchill Livingstone. ISBN 0-443-01577-5.

## Results

> 18 sources of anonymised nursing notes each incorporating 7 days of nursing documentation with an average of 2 entries per 24-hour period were obtained.

> This resulted in 126 days over all, around 252 entries, and 19,622 words that were analysed.

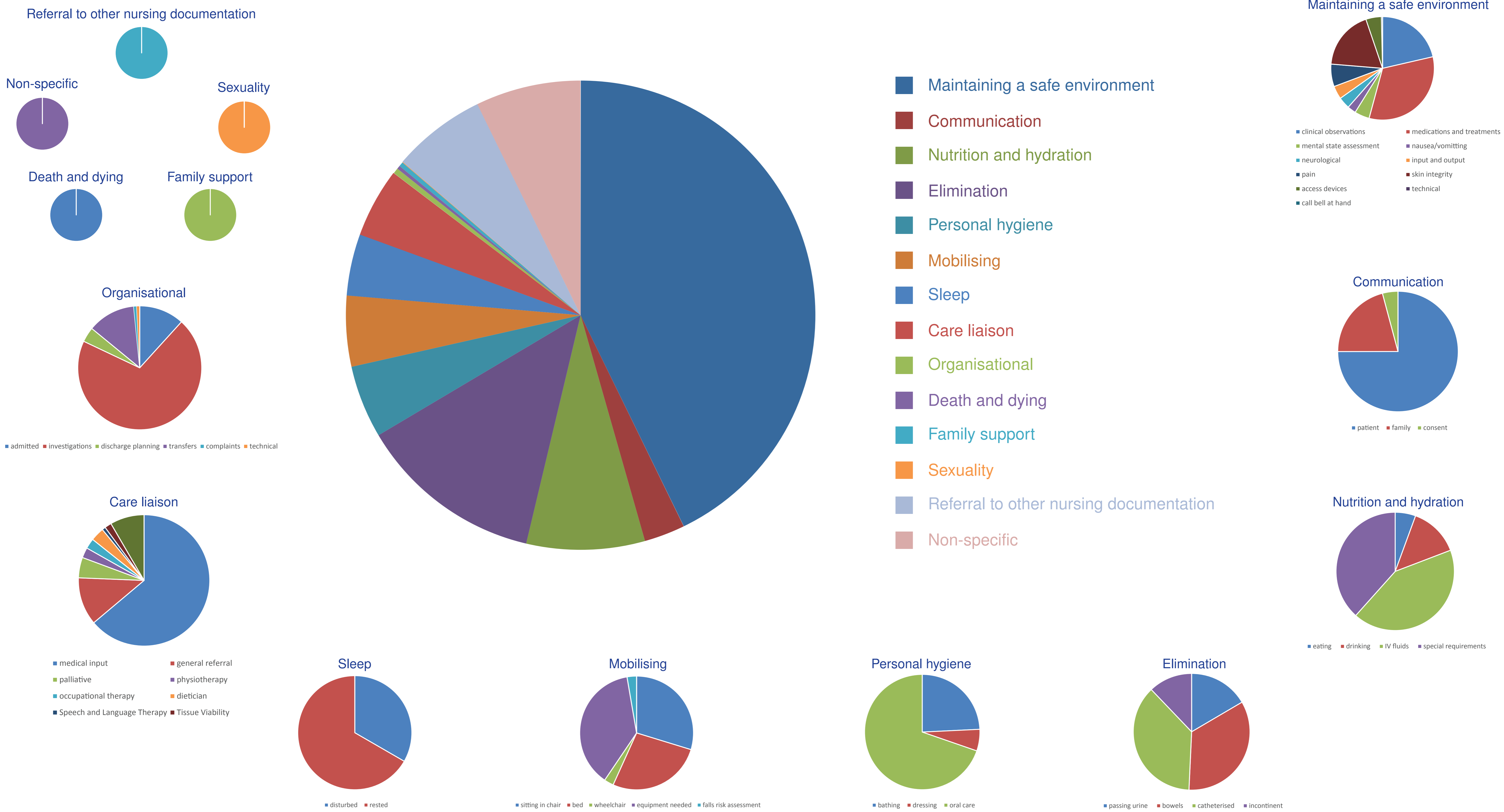
## Findings

> A diverse range of subjects were identified within the nursing records.  
> Overall there was a lack of coherence regarding the style of writing and the objectives of the entries, for example whether they aimed to describe, evaluate or recommend care.  
> A high number of repetitive statements with an unclear or non-specific purpose were present; many of these replicated or referred to aspects of care documented elsewhere.  
> A small number of statements that reflected nursing activity more effectively were present.

Word Cloud Showing their Frequency of Use



Nursing Documentation Coding Framework



## Discussion

> The analysis of clinically derived nursing records did not identify the presence of a shared, cohesive approach within nursing documentation.  
> There was evidence that this may have contributed to poor documentation practice.  
> The findings suggest that nursing does not have an agreed approach to documentation, unlike that which is seen in other healthcare professions, such as medicine and physiotherapy.

## Next Steps

> This objective analysis of nurses' written records provides useful insights into current practice in nursing documentation.  
> Further analysis will be conducted to explore additional aspects of the data.  
> The findings will be used to support the next phase of the project; working with nurses at a local and national level to achieve a consensus on exemplars of statements that make a positive contribution to patient care.