Challenges of Military Nurses in the Caring Process of Patients with COVID-19 in Iran: A Qualitative Study

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Background: The illness caused by the novel coronavirus is an emerging disease. For this reason, the international community is encountering an unknown nature of most of its dimensions, such as clinical features, treatments, and long-term complications. Experience suggests that humans are affected by the psychological and social effects of epidemics and pandemics of infectious diseases. Caring for patients with this disease is a new experience that needs to be explored. The present study was carried out using a qualitative method to detect the challenges to which nurses are faced in the process of caring for patients with COVID-19 in Iran.

Methods: This is a qualitative study using in-depth semi-structured interviews with 19 key informants selected via targeted sampling. Data were analyzed by thematic analysis to extract the challenges to which the nurses are encountered in the caring process of patients with COVID-19 in Iran.

Results: Challenges of the nurses in the caring process of patients with COVID-19 were listed in five categories of stress and psychological issues, equipment-related challenges, increased events of errors, medication and treatment problems, and hospital management. In the meantime, 35 subcategories were also identified.

Conclusion: Because nurses are at the forefront of fighting with COVID-19, there must be plans to increase their preparedness. Deficiencies in health systems, including equipment, medicine, and personal protective gear should also be addressed so that nurses can better respond to these incidents. Psychological and mental support is a key component of the nurses' appropriate response; thus, along with nurses' responses, individual, group, and family psychological support should be provided to increase performance and effectiveness in response to COVID-19.

Key words: Preparedness, Nurses, COVID-19, Novel Coronavirus, Quality, Military, Iran