

Patients and family members in out-of hospital emergency care

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Purpose and Background

In acute care situations patients and their family members need counselling and support, for coping themselves. Emergency care inside hospital settings has been studied to some degree, however more research needs to be done concerning out-of-hospital emergency care. Knowledge is needed for developing evidence-based care in situations where care starts acutely, in the presence of patients' family members, outside the hospital. The aim of this research is to describe counselling and care of family members in acute out-of-hospital situations from the viewpoint of emergency care personnel.

Methods

The data was collected by questionnaires (N=142, 53%) from emergency care staff and analyzed statistically.

Results

- Half of the respondents were men and half women, and the mean age was 34 years.
- About 80% of the respondents introduced themselves to the patient and the family member.
- A majority (82 %) aimed to give enough information concerning the situation of the patient to both patients themselves and their family members.
- Almost all (90 %) also ensured that both patients and their family members had understood the home care instructions well.
- Half of the respondents said that they have sufficient time to support the patients and their family members emotionally. Of the respondents, 11% were uncomfortable with the presence of family members in an acute care situation.
- Family members were encouraged to participate in the care of the patient at home by 83% of the respondents.
- Nearly 20% felt that it was difficult to make the decision not to transport the patient when ambulatory transport is not required and care is given immediately.

Conclusions

The results are quite encouraging concerning counseling in out-of-hospital situations, where patients' family members are also present. However, it is important to develop the emergency care process to make it more understandable for patients and family members.