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Registered Nurses explain assessment and identification of delirium among older people in hospitals

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Abstract
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(488) Registered Nurses explain assessment and identification of delirium among older people in hospitals

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Abstract
Background: Delirium is an international concern with professional organisations, policy initiatives and educators and researchers focusing their attention on delirium (Maclullich et al. 2013). Delirium is a common complication experienced by older people in hospital, resulting in dementia, re-location into residential accommodation and mortality (Witlox et al. 2010) and often remains under-recognised (Maclullich et al. 2013). Current understanding about delirium is focused on improving knowledge and increasing the use of delirium screening tools. What is missing is an understanding about how Registered Nurses assess and identify delirium.

Aim: Explain how Registered Nurses (RNs) assess and identify delirium among older people in hospitals.

Method: A qualitative study with a sample of 24 RNs with experience in assessing and identifying delirium among older people in medical wards and emergency department in a regional hospital in Australia. Data were generated from group interviews and concurrent data analysis was undertaken using line-by-line constant comparison. An ethics committee approved the study.

Findings: A total of 5 themes were generated to explain the experiences of RNs who have assessed and identified delirium among older people in hospitals.

Discussion: This study confirms previous findings about the importance of delirium knowledge and use of delirium screening tools for effective assessment and identification (Steiss et al., 2008). New issues identified were the importance of personal responsibilities for becoming competent to assess and identify delirium, concerns about the diagnosis being seen as stigmatising and the professional boundaries around who undertakes an assessment.

Conclusions and implications: The findings provide understanding about the challenges and enablers experienced by RNs assessing and identifying delirium in older people in hospital. The evidence will be used to inform a future intervention to improve delirium care for older people in regional hospitals in Australia.

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