Giving Voice to Loved Ones: Using Photo-Voice as a Data Collection Method in ICU

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The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) is a place of care for the most critically ill patients. The ICU rooms are considered to be one of the most complicated rooms to design. Providing successful intensive care requires that human, technologies and spatial resources are integrated in a rigorous way. Research shows that being a patient or next-of-kin in ICU is a traumatic experience not only because of the illness but also because of one’s human existence is threatened. Literature suggests that the presence of next-of-kin and the design of ICU affect the patients’ recovery and wellbeing.

Aim: The aim of this study as a part of a larger research project was to illuminate next-of-kin’s experiences of the physical environment in patient’s room in ICU.

Method: Data were collected through qualitative research interviews in combination with a photo-voice method (Colleen et al., 2008). The next-of-kin were invited to take photos of various aspects of the room that they associated with a feeling. Data were analyzed using a phenomenological hermeneutics method.

Result and conclusion: The room is seen as a safe and an emotional place to dwell in. People, relations and the interiors build up the atmosphere in the room. Being in this room means to try to create a temporary living-room different to ordinary life and to try to inhabit the room both as a physical place and a lived space. It also means being in a state of uncertainty and homelessness. Some of the photos will also be presented as well as a short discussion about the data collection method.

Keyword: Experiences, Patient-room, ICU, Photo-voice