

**AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES OF INTENSIVE CARE
NURSES REGARDING THE BOWEL PROTOCOL FOR
THE CRITICALLY ILL PATIENTS**

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SIGNED STATEMENT

I certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for any award of any other degree or diploma in any other university.

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due references has been made in the text.

I give consent to this thesis being available for loan and photocopying, when deposited in the School of Nursing Library.

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ABSTRACT

Patients in the intensive care unit are critically ill and are commonly on life support systems such as mechanical ventilation medication to stabilise their haemodynamic parameters. They are usually unable to eat or drink and are fed through a nasogastric or naso-enteric tube. With the priority being resuscitation and life support, normal physiological functions and requirements can be over ridden, one of which is bowel function.

There are no set guidelines nationally recognised for the management of the bowel. But most institutions have a bowel protocol in order to facilitate and promote the bowel function of these patients. Despite this, anecdotal evidence indicates bowel management is often overlooked or ignored.

The aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes and awareness of the nurses working in the intensive care setting towards the bowel protocol used for the critically ill patients from the level III intensive care units of three different public hospitals (Appendix 1). A simple descriptive design in the form of an online survey was conducted for the nurses working in the intensive care unit. Data were analysed using simple descriptive statistics and qualitative data a content analysis.

The findings of this study indicated that even though many of the nurses were experienced, there still remain concerns regarding bowel management with issues of lack of knowledge and awareness, lack of accountability and responsibility and poor attitudes of staff.

Recommendations were made to increase education and staff awareness with regular audits and vigilant supervision. Also further studies related to this concept are recommended preferably in a different setting.