

Poster Session II

#13

Patients With Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study Of Their Surgical Experience

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Purpose: This poster will include a descriptive phenomenological study of the experiences of patients with ASD and their families when interacting with an acute care hospital to have surgery. This research will carry the voices of patients, as they tell of their surgical experiences.

Background: The purpose of the study is to fill a perceived knowledge gap for perioperative nurses when planning the surgical care of persons with ASD. This study will inform nurses of the surgical experiences of person's with ASD so that a baseline can be established that highlights the issues and concerns of patients with ASD. Nursing research in the United States in the area of autism related issues is limited and is almost nonexistent in the surgical specialty arena.

Methods: The methodology of Colaizzi (1978) will be used to guide the data analysis, and data will be collected via the Internet. Participants have been recruited from multiple websites, networks, and online family support groups. Participants are interviewed through email "conversations." Eligible participants are the adult caregivers of persons with ASD, or adults with ASD who have access to email. 15 participants have completed interviews so far. The research statement that guides the interview is, "Please tell me about your (or your family member's) experiences when having surgery. Please include any interactions with the hospital or your surgeon that happened before the day of surgery, the day of surgery and the after-surgical care." There is a risk that the study may miss persons without access to email, but alternatively, there may be a benefit to using this method. It may allow those who have an easier time writing responses to participate because they will not be subjected to a traditional, taped, face-to-face 60 minute interview.

Results, Conclusions and Expected findings: The experiences of the phenomenon, as related by the individuals who experienced them are considered to be a "presentification of the thing itself" (Husserl 1970) and therefore offers the researcher an opportunity to gain an understanding to describe what the experience of having surgery has been like for patients with ASD. The findings of a descriptive phenomenological study are presented as an exhaustive description of the phenomenon and key themes will be identified. Descriptive research is essential when a phenomenon has not been studied yet, to guide practitioners and researchers in future work.