

Elizabeth Kusi-Appiah - University of Alberta

Project: *Intersectional exploration of psychological distress experiences among women in critical care*

Background



Hospitalization in intensive care units (ICUs) has been linked to psychological distress, especially in female patients, adversely affecting health outcomes and impeding recovery (Levine et al., 2021; Buckland et al., 2019; McCurley et al., 2019). Existing literature lacks an exploration of factors associated with

psychological distress in female ICU patients. Additionally, the intersectionality of race and gender in the context of psychological distress remains unexplored, particularly for Black women, who are also underrepresented in critical care research (Tchouambou Youmbi et al., 2023). This study addresses the dearth of research on psychological distress in female ICU patients, emphasizing the unexplored intersectionality of race and gender, particularly for Black women. The aim is to understand the role of gender and race in shaping women's responses to critical care-related psychological distress and to develop recommendations for management.

The study adopts patient-oriented research and an interpretive description approach. Patient partners (PPs) with ICU hospitalization experience will actively contribute to various stages of the research to enhance the project's impact. PPs

will receive ongoing support to meaningfully contribute to study design, data collection, analysis, writing, and dissemination as per their time, interest, and availability. Monthly meetings will be held for ongoing collaboration and to receive PPs' inputs. In collaboration with PPs, we will recruit post-ICU female survivors through purposeful maximum variation sampling to account for various social intersections. Using an intersectional lens, we will conduct one-on-one interviews soliciting participants' stories and meanings, which will iteratively inform 2-3 focus groups. Sample size will depend on data richness and saturation. Recruitment will be through AHS Critical Care Strategic Clinical Network (SCN), ABSPORU platforms, and participating post-ICU clinics (Misericordia, Foothills). We will use Alessi & Kahn's (2023) trauma-informed qualitative research guidelines to minimize the risk of re-traumatizing PPs and study participants in discussions and research endeavors. The expected outcomes of the study are as follows: a) to bring to the forefront women's and Black women's experiences of psychological distress in critical care, along with the role of intersectionality; b) to elucidate practice recommendations for the assessment and management of female ICU patients experiencing psychological distress.

Elizabeth Kusi-Appiah is a registered nurse with the Northern Alberta Kidney Care program and a doctoral nursing student at the University of Alberta. She has clinical backgrounds in medical-surgical, general surgery, and hemodialysis nursing. She holds a Master of Nursing degree from the University of Alberta and a Bachelor of Nursing degree from Garden City University, Ghana. Currently, she is a second-year PhD student in the doctoral nursing program. Her research explores the intersectional factors in women's experiences of psychological distress in the ICU, with a particular focus on Black women.