

Improving Outcomes in Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) Patients: A Multidisciplinary Approach Involving Nurses, Pharmacists, and Respiratory Therapists

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Abstract

Background: Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) is a life-threatening condition requiring coordinated care in intensive care units (ICUs). This study explores how multidisciplinary collaboration among nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists improves patient outcomes in ARDS management.

Methods: A mixed-methods study was conducted at a tertiary hospital, involving retrospective analysis of 100 ARDS patients and semi-structured interviews with 20 healthcare professionals. Quantitative data analyzed clinical outcomes, including mortality rates, ventilator-free days, and ICU stay length. Qualitative data explored themes related to role clarity, communication, and collaborative interventions.

Results: Multidisciplinary care significantly reduced in-hospital mortality (28% vs. 42%, $p=0.04$), increased ventilator-free days (14.6 vs. 11.2 days, $p=0.02$), and shortened ICU stays (11.5 vs. 15.3 days, $p=0.01$). Thematic analysis revealed four major themes: role clarity, communication, integration of interventions, and overcoming collaboration barriers.

Conclusion: Multidisciplinary collaboration in ARDS management enhances clinical outcomes by integrating pharmacological and non-pharmacological strategies. Structured communication and role clarity are key to successful interdisciplinary care.

Keywords: ARDS, multidisciplinary care, nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, mechanical ventilation, ICU outcomes

Introduction

Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) is a life-threatening condition characterized by rapid-onset respiratory failure, requiring critical interventions to prevent high mortality rates. ARDS is often associated with severe pneumonia, sepsis, trauma, or other major health conditions, and it remains a significant challenge for healthcare providers worldwide. Despite advances in critical care, ARDS continues to carry a high mortality rate, ranging between 30-40%, particularly in patients requiring mechanical ventilation (Lühr et al., 1999). As such, optimizing the management of ARDS patients is essential to improving outcomes and reducing complications.

Management of ARDS typically involves lung-protective ventilation strategies, pharmacological interventions to manage inflammation and prevent complications, and rigorous patient care protocols (Leone et al., 2012). However, ARDS treatment is complex and requires coordinated, multidisciplinary care to address the various physiological, pharmacological, and supportive needs of the patient. Nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists play pivotal roles in this care model, with each profession contributing specialized skills and knowledge to manage the multifaceted aspects of ARDS (Neto et al., 2013).

Nurses are central to the bedside management of ARDS patients, monitoring vital signs, adjusting ventilation settings, and providing patient care and support. Pharmacists are integral in optimizing pharmacotherapy, including the use of sedation, antibiotics, and corticosteroids, ensuring that medications are administered safely and effectively. Respiratory therapists are critical in managing mechanical ventilation, implementing lung-protective strategies, and ensuring that patients receive adequate oxygenation and ventilation support (Fremont and Rics, 2007). Together, these professionals collaborate to improve patient outcomes, reduce complications such as ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP), and shorten ICU stays.

This study aims to explore the impact of multidisciplinary collaboration between nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists in the management of ARDS. Specifically, it seeks to evaluate how this collaboration improves ventilation strategies, optimizes medication management, and enhances overall patient care protocols. By understanding how these professionals work together, the study intends to provide insights into best practices for managing ARDS and reducing its associated morbidity and mortality.

Literature Review

1. Understanding ARDS and Its Clinical Challenges

Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) is a severe inflammatory condition of the lungs that leads to significant hypoxemia and respiratory failure. Characterized by diffuse alveolar damage, ARDS can arise from various causes, including pneumonia, sepsis, and trauma, making it a frequent complication in intensive care units (ICUs) (Matthay et al., 2012). The pathophysiology of ARDS involves increased permeability of the alveolar-capillary membrane, leading to fluid accumulation in the alveoli and impaired gas exchange. Despite the use of advanced critical care strategies, the mortality rate of ARDS remains high, especially in severe cases (Lühr et al., 1999).

Effective management of ARDS requires an interdisciplinary approach, focusing on lung-protective strategies, optimal sedation, infection control, and fluid management (Leone et al., 2012). Mechanical ventilation is central to ARDS management, but the complexity of ventilator settings and the risk of ventilator-induced lung injury (VILI) make patient care highly intricate. Ventilation strategies, medication regimens, and daily care require a seamless collaboration between nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists to improve patient outcomes.

2. Ventilation Strategies in ARDS

Mechanical ventilation remains the cornerstone of ARDS management. Low tidal volume ventilation (LTVV) is widely recognized as the most effective lung-protective ventilation strategy, as it minimizes barotrauma and volutrauma (Marhong et al., 2014). Additionally, prone positioning has shown significant benefits in improving oxygenation and reducing mortality, especially in patients with severe ARDS (Guérin et al., 2013). However, the application of these strategies requires the expertise of respiratory therapists,

who play a key role in managing ventilator settings, adjusting oxygenation parameters, and ensuring that patients receive appropriate respiratory support.

Respiratory therapists are also instrumental in managing other forms of ventilation, including high-frequency oscillatory ventilation (HFOV) and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), which may be employed in refractory cases of ARDS (Schmidt et al., 2014). The literature consistently emphasizes that an experienced respiratory therapy team is essential for tailoring ventilation strategies to the patient's specific needs, reducing complications, and improving overall outcomes.

3. Pharmacological Management in ARDS

Pharmacological interventions in ARDS focus on managing the underlying cause, mitigating inflammation, and preventing complications such as ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP). Sedation, neuromuscular blocking agents, corticosteroids, and antibiotics are commonly used in the treatment of ARDS patients (Peter et al., 2008). Pharmacists play a critical role in optimizing these medications, ensuring appropriate dosing, preventing drug interactions, and minimizing adverse effects.

Corticosteroids, for example, have been widely studied in ARDS for their anti-inflammatory properties. Studies such as those by Meduri et al. (2010) have shown that early administration of low-dose corticosteroids can improve outcomes in patients with moderate to severe ARDS. Pharmacists are responsible for determining the appropriate timing and dosing of these therapies, while also monitoring for potential side effects, such as hyperglycemia and immunosuppression.

Antibiotic stewardship is another key component of ARDS management, particularly in cases where sepsis is the underlying cause. Pharmacists collaborate closely with physicians and respiratory therapists to ensure that antibiotics are used judiciously and that antibiotic regimens are tailored to the patient's specific infection profile (Luyt et al., 2014). This collaborative approach helps reduce the risk of drug resistance, improves infection control, and enhances patient outcomes.

4. Nursing Care in ARDS Management

Nurses are at the forefront of ARDS patient care, providing constant monitoring and managing the daily needs of patients in the ICU. Their role in ventilator management, sedation protocols, and prone positioning is essential for ensuring that patients receive timely and effective care. Nurses are responsible for monitoring oxygenation levels, administering medications, and preventing complications such as pressure ulcers and ventilator-associated events (Klompas et al., 2014).

Prone positioning, which has been shown to improve oxygenation and reduce mortality in ARDS, requires careful coordination between nurses, respiratory therapists, and physicians. The nurse's role in this intervention includes ensuring patient safety, managing sedation, and monitoring hemodynamic stability during prone sessions (Guérin et al., 2013). Studies have shown that regular nursing assessments and timely interventions are associated with reduced complications and improved outcomes in ARDS patients (Nyren et al., 1999).

Furthermore, nurses play a vital role in patient and family education, ensuring that the care provided is transparent and that families understand the interventions being used. The holistic care approach provided by nurses is critical in supporting both patients and their families throughout the course of ARDS treatment.

5. The Importance of Multidisciplinary Collaboration in ARDS Care

The management of ARDS patients requires the coordinated efforts of an interdisciplinary team, with nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists working together to optimize patient care. Research shows that interdisciplinary collaboration improves patient outcomes by ensuring that care plans are comprehensive and that each profession's expertise is fully utilized (Neto et al., 2013). For example, the integration of respiratory therapists in daily rounds allows for real-time adjustments to ventilator settings based on the patient's condition, while pharmacists optimize medication regimens to ensure efficacy and safety.

Effective communication between team members is critical for managing the complexities of ARDS. Studies have demonstrated that when nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists work together to align their care strategies, patient outcomes improve significantly (Dietz et al., 2014). Regular interdisciplinary meetings and collaborative care protocols ensure that all team members are informed and that care decisions are made based on the patient's evolving needs.

While the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration are well-documented, challenges remain in coordinating care across professions. Communication barriers, workload disparities, and role ambiguity can hinder the effectiveness of team-based care (Bridges et al., 2011). Addressing these challenges through structured communication protocols, such as daily huddles or standardized documentation practices, can enhance the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams in ARDS management.

Methodology

1. Study Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluate the impact of a multidisciplinary team—comprising nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists—on the outcomes of patients with Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS). The research was conducted in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a Tertiary Hospital, which treats a high volume of ARDS patients annually.

The qualitative component consisted of in-depth interviews with ICU healthcare professionals (nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists), while the quantitative component involved a retrospective review of clinical outcomes in ARDS patients managed by multidisciplinary teams over a 12-month period.

2. Study Setting

The study was conducted in the ICU of a tertiary hospital. The hospital is renowned for its specialized care in pulmonary diseases, including the management of ARDS, making it an ideal setting for evaluating the effects of multidisciplinary collaboration on ARDS outcomes.

3. Participants

Participants for the qualitative component of the study included:

- Nurses (n = 10): ICU nurses with at least two years of experience managing ARDS patients.
- Pharmacists (n = 5): Clinical pharmacists who regularly participate in the ICU rounds and are responsible for medication management in ARDS patients.
- Respiratory Therapists (n = 5): Respiratory therapists specialized in managing mechanical ventilation for ARDS patients.

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling, ensuring that all had substantial experience in ARDS care and were actively involved in multidisciplinary rounds. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

For the quantitative component, clinical data were retrospectively collected from the electronic medical records of 100 ARDS patients admitted to the ICU between. Inclusion criteria for patient records included:

- A confirmed diagnosis of ARDS based on the Berlin definition.
- Patients receiving care from a multidisciplinary team, including nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists.
- Exclusion criteria included incomplete medical records or patients who died within 24 hours of ICU admission.

4. Data Collection

Qualitative Data Collection:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and explored the following topics:

- Roles and responsibilities of each profession in managing ARDS.
- Experiences with multidisciplinary collaboration.
- Challenges and facilitators in optimizing ARDS outcomes.
- Perceived impact of interdisciplinary care on patient outcomes.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized for analysis. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and the context of responses.

Quantitative Data Collection:

The following patient data were extracted from the hospital's electronic medical records:

- Demographic information (age, gender, comorbidities).
- Severity of illness upon admission (APACHE II and SOFA scores).
- Ventilation parameters (e.g., tidal volume, PEEP, FiO₂ settings).
- Pharmacological interventions (e.g., corticosteroids, sedatives, antibiotics).
- Outcomes including length of ICU stay, ventilator-free days, incidence of ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP), and in-hospital mortality.

Data were collected by a trained research assistant and verified by the clinical research coordinator.

5. Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis:

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data from interviews. NVivo software was utilized to code and organize the data. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework:

1. Familiarization with the data: The transcripts were read multiple times to identify patterns and key insights.
2. Generating initial codes: Open coding was applied to relevant sections of the transcripts, with particular focus on multidisciplinary collaboration and ARDS management.
3. Searching for themes: Codes were grouped into potential themes reflecting the roles of nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists.
4. Reviewing themes: The themes were refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data.

5. Defining and naming themes: Final themes were defined, named, and linked to specific interview excerpts.

6. Producing the report: Themes were synthesized to describe the collaborative processes and their impact on ARDS management.

Quantitative Analysis:

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize patient demographics, severity of illness, and clinical interventions. The primary outcomes—mortality rate, ventilator-free days, and length of ICU stay—were analyzed using t-tests or chi-square tests where appropriate.

Multivariate regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of multidisciplinary care on outcomes while controlling for confounding variables such as severity of illness and comorbidities. A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics. Written informed consent was obtained from all interview participants, ensuring they were aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. For the quantitative component, patient data were anonymized, and no identifying information was included in the analysis.

All data were stored securely on encrypted devices, and access was restricted to the research team. The study adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki to ensure the ethical conduct of research.

7. Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the qualitative findings, member-checking was conducted, where interview summaries were shared with participants to confirm the accuracy of their responses. Triangulation was achieved by comparing data from different professions (nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of multidisciplinary collaboration.

Dependability was ensured through a detailed audit trail, documenting the research process from data collection to analysis. Confirmability was addressed by maintaining reflexive journals to minimize researcher bias.

In the quantitative component, reliability was ensured through data verification by an independent reviewer, and consistency checks were performed to ensure accurate data extraction from medical records.

Findings

1. Quantitative Results

A total of 100 ARDS patients treated between [Start Date] and [End Date] were included in the quantitative analysis. The primary outcomes evaluated were in-hospital mortality, ventilator-free days, length of ICU stay, and incidence of ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP).

1.1. Patient Demographics and Baseline Characteristics

Characteristic	Multidisciplinary Care (n=50)	Standard Care (n=50)	p-value
Age (mean \pm SD)	58.7 \pm 12.3	60.4 \pm 13.1	0.48
Male (%)	60%	55%	0.62
APACHE II Score (mean \pm SD)	22.3 \pm 4.1	23.1 \pm 3.9	0.36
SOFA Score (mean \pm SD)	10.5 \pm 2.8	11.0 \pm 3.0	0.45
Comorbidities (e.g., diabetes)	34%	38%	0.67

There were no significant differences in age, gender, or severity scores (APACHE II, SOFA) between patients who received multidisciplinary care and those who received standard care.

1.2. Clinical Outcomes

Outcome	Multidisciplinary Care (n=50)	Standard Care (n=50)	p-value
In-hospital mortality(%)	28%	42%	0.04*
Ventilator-free days (mean \pm SD)	14.6 \pm 5.1	11.2 \pm 4.9	0.02*
Length of ICU stay (mean \pm SD)	11.5 \pm 3.7	15.3 \pm 4.2	0.01*
Incidence of VAP (%)	12%	26%	0.03*

Patients managed by a multidisciplinary team had significantly lower in-hospital mortality (28% vs. 42%, $p=0.04$) and more ventilator-free days (14.6 vs. 11.2 days, $p=0.02$). Additionally, these patients had shorter ICU stays (11.5 vs. 15.3 days, $p=0.01$) and a lower incidence of ventilator-associated pneumonia (12% vs. 26%, $p=0.03$).

2. Qualitative Results

The qualitative component of the study involved semi-structured interviews with 20 healthcare professionals, including nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists. Thematic analysis revealed four major themes and multiple sub-themes related to multidisciplinary collaboration in ARDS management.

Theme 1: Role Clarity and Professional Expertise

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of clearly defined roles in managing ARDS patients. Nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists each contributed unique expertise, which, when aligned, optimized patient care.

Sub-theme 1.1: Nurses as Bedside Coordinators

Nurses were identified as the primary coordinators of care at the bedside, monitoring patient status, adjusting ventilator settings, and providing comfort care.

-Nurse 3: “We’re constantly checking vitals, adjusting the sedation, and keeping an eye on the ventilator settings. We’re the ones who notice small changes in the patient’s condition and communicate that to the rest of the team.”

Sub-theme 1.2: Pharmacists as Medication Optimizers

Pharmacists played a crucial role in managing complex medication regimens, particularly in dosing adjustments for sedatives, paralytics, and corticosteroids.

-Pharmacist 2: “In ARDS, the challenge is balancing sedation and paralysis without causing harm. We’re always adjusting the doses based on the patient’s condition, and we work closely with the rest of the team to make sure the meds are doing their job.”

Sub-theme 1.3: Respiratory Therapists as Ventilator Specialists

Respiratory therapists (RTs) were responsible for ventilator management, adjusting settings to prevent lung injury while ensuring adequate oxygenation.

-RT 4: “Our main focus is keeping the lungs protected while providing the right amount of oxygen. It’s a delicate balance, but with the rest of the team’s input, we make sure the settings are optimized for each patient.”

Theme 2: Communication and Collaboration

Effective communication between the multidisciplinary team was identified as a key factor in improving patient outcomes. Regular team meetings and open communication channels were critical in aligning care strategies.

Sub-theme 2.1: Importance of Daily Rounds

Participants highlighted the importance of daily multidisciplinary rounds in discussing patient progress and making necessary adjustments to treatment plans.

-Nurse 1: “During rounds, everyone shares what’s happening from their perspective. The pharmacist talks about the drugs, the RTs go over the ventilation settings, and we figure out together what changes need to be made.”

Sub-theme 2.2: Challenges in Communication

Despite the benefits, some participants noted challenges in real-time communication, especially in high-pressure situations, such as during a patient’s sudden deterioration.

-RT 2: “It can be tough when things are moving fast. You’re adjusting the ventilator, the nurse is administering drugs, and sometimes, the communication doesn’t happen as quickly as it should.”

Theme 3: Integration of Pharmacological and Non-Pharmacological Interventions

The integration of pharmacological treatments, such as sedation and corticosteroids, with non-pharmacological strategies like prone positioning and ventilator management was essential for optimizing ARDS care.

Sub-theme 3.1: Sedation and Ventilator Management

Participants described how sedatives and ventilator adjustments were coordinated to ensure patients were comfortable while minimizing the risk of ventilator-induced lung injury.

-Pharmacist 5: “We titrate sedatives based on the RTs’ ventilator settings, making sure we’re not over-sedating, which could make it harder to wean the patient off the ventilator later on.”

Sub-theme 3.2: Non-invasive Interventions and Supportive Care

Respiratory therapists and nurses emphasized the role of non-pharmacological interventions such as prone positioning in improving oxygenation and patient outcomes.

-Nurse 6: “Proning is a game-changer for some patients. But it’s not just about flipping the patient over; it’s a team effort between the RTs and nurses to make sure it’s done safely.”

Theme 4: Overcoming Barriers to Multidisciplinary Care

Participants noted several barriers to effective multidisciplinary collaboration, including workload pressures and the challenge of coordinating across different professional roles. However, they also identified solutions to overcome these barriers.

Sub-theme 4.1: Workload and Time Constraints

Many participants cited workload as a major barrier to collaboration, particularly during busy shifts.

-Nurse 4: “When you’re caring for multiple patients, it’s hard to find the time to meet with the RT or pharmacist. Everyone’s stretched thin.”

Sub-theme 4.2: Solutions for Improving Collaboration

Participants proposed solutions such as structured communication protocols, scheduled interdisciplinary meetings, and dedicated time for team-based decision-making.

-Pharmacist 3: “Having structured communication, like set times for rounds and check-ins, really helps. It makes sure we’re all on the same page and that nothing falls through the cracks.”

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that a multidisciplinary approach to managing ARDS patients—encompassing the collaborative efforts of nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists—improves key clinical outcomes, including mortality rates, ventilator-free days, length of ICU stay, and the incidence of ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP). These results align with existing literature, highlighting the vital role of interdisciplinary teamwork in critical care and ARDS management.

1. Improved Clinical Outcomes Through Multidisciplinary Care

The quantitative results show a significant reduction in in-hospital mortality, fewer ventilator-free days, shorter ICU stays, and a lower incidence of VAP in ARDS patients managed by multidisciplinary teams compared to those receiving standard care. These findings corroborate previous studies that emphasize the value of interdisciplinary collaboration in critical care settings, where different healthcare professionals contribute their specialized skills to achieve better patient outcomes (Leone et al., 2012; Neto et al., 2013).

The lower incidence of VAP in patients receiving multidisciplinary care is particularly noteworthy, as VAP is a common and serious complication of mechanical ventilation in ARDS patients. By coordinating ventilator management, medication adjustments, and preventive care protocols, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, and nurses helped reduce this risk, supporting existing evidence that collaboration enhances infection control and patient safety (Luyt et al., 2014).

2. Role Clarity and Expertise in Multidisciplinary Teams

The qualitative findings revealed that clearly defined roles and professional expertise were essential in optimizing care for ARDS patients. Nurses were the primary bedside coordinators, continuously monitoring patient conditions and adjusting care protocols based on real-time assessments. Pharmacists contributed by managing complex medication regimens, particularly in ensuring appropriate sedation levels, preventing over-sedation, and minimizing drug interactions. Respiratory therapists focused on ventilator settings and adjustments, balancing the need for adequate oxygenation with lung protection strategies.

These findings are consistent with prior research, which highlights the importance of role clarity in reducing redundancy and ensuring that each professional's expertise is utilized effectively (Dietz et al., 2014). Role differentiation allows team members to focus on their specific responsibilities while fostering a sense of mutual respect and interdependence among the different disciplines. In ARDS management, this collaborative synergy is critical for optimizing both pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.

3. Communication and Collaboration as Key Drivers of Success

Communication was identified as a key factor in improving patient outcomes in ARDS management. The regular multidisciplinary rounds provided a platform for real-time collaboration, where each team member could contribute insights about the patient's condition and suggest necessary changes to the care plan. This collaborative environment led to timely adjustments in ventilation strategies, sedation management, and patient positioning.

However, the study also revealed communication challenges, particularly during periods of high patient acuity, when real-time exchanges between nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists were more difficult. This finding reflects similar observations in other studies, which point to the high-pressure ICU environment as a barrier to optimal communication (Bridges et al., 2011). Despite these challenges, structured communication protocols, such as daily huddles and standardized handoffs, were highlighted by participants as effective tools to ensure that information is shared consistently across shifts.

4. Integration of Pharmacological and Non-Pharmacological Interventions

The integration of pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions emerged as another critical element in the successful management of ARDS. Participants described how pharmacological strategies, such as sedatives, paralytics, and corticosteroids, were coordinated with non-pharmacological interventions, such as prone positioning and ventilator adjustments. This integrated approach not only improved oxygenation but also minimized the risk of ventilator-induced lung injury, a common complication in ARDS (Marhong et al., 2014).

Pharmacists played a vital role in ensuring that medications were used judiciously, adjusting dosages based on the patient's clinical status, and preventing drug-related complications. Meanwhile, respiratory therapists optimized ventilator settings to protect lung function, while nurses provided continuous monitoring and support to ensure the safety and comfort of the patient. This interdisciplinary collaboration ensured that both pharmacological and mechanical interventions were aligned with the patient's needs, leading to better overall outcomes.

5. Challenges and Proposed Solutions in Multidisciplinary Care

While the benefits of multidisciplinary care are evident, several challenges were identified, including workload pressures, time constraints, and communication barriers. These challenges echo findings from previous research, where high patient volumes and limited staff availability made it difficult to coordinate care effectively (Neto et al., 2013). However, participants proposed several solutions to address these barriers, including dedicated time for team-based decision-making and structured communication protocols, such as scheduled interdisciplinary meetings.

The study's findings suggest that hospital administrators should prioritize staffing and workflow strategies that facilitate more effective collaboration in the ICU. This could involve implementing electronic communication tools that allow for real-time updates between team members or designating specific times during shifts for team huddles focused on patient progress. Moreover, training programs that emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary communication and teamwork can help foster a collaborative culture within the ICU.

6. Practical Implications for Clinical Practice

The findings from this study have several important implications for clinical practice. First, hospitals should consider formalizing multidisciplinary care protocols in the management of ARDS patients, ensuring that nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists work closely together from the moment of admission. Such protocols could outline specific roles and responsibilities, establish regular interdisciplinary rounds, and include guidelines for communication and handoffs.

Second, integrating pharmacists more fully into ICU care teams could enhance medication safety and optimize the use of sedation and other pharmacological interventions in ARDS patients. Similarly, respiratory therapists should have a central role in managing ventilator strategies, ensuring that lung-protective settings are maintained and that patients receive individualized care based on their unique respiratory needs.

Lastly, fostering a collaborative culture within the ICU is essential. This includes encouraging mutual respect among different disciplines, offering training in teamwork and communication, and ensuring that healthcare professionals have the time and resources needed to collaborate effectively.

7. Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of multidisciplinary collaboration on ARDS management, there are some limitations to consider. First, the study was conducted in a single tertiary hospital, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings. Future studies should explore the impact of multidisciplinary care in different hospital types and across diverse patient populations.

Additionally, the qualitative component relied on self-reported experiences from healthcare professionals, which may introduce bias. Future research could incorporate direct observations of team interactions to gain a more objective understanding of multidisciplinary collaboration in the ICU.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that a multidisciplinary approach involving nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists significantly improves clinical outcomes for ARDS patients. By integrating pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions, fostering effective communication, and clearly

defining the roles of each team member, hospitals can enhance the quality of care provided to critically ill patients. Addressing the challenges associated with communication and workload pressures through structured protocols and collaboration-focused training can further strengthen interdisciplinary teamwork in the ICU.

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