

PREPPING FOR KNIFELESS PRECISION: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MINIMALLY INVASIVE SURGERY NURSES ON PREOPERATIVE SAFETY PROTOCOL

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Abstract

This hermeneutic phenomenological study aimed to investigate firsthand experiences and explore the importance of minimally invasive surgery (MIS) nurses' preoperative safety protocol compliance, including comprehensive assessments, verification processes, effective communication strategies, and identification of possible challenges. Descriptions of the phenomena were captured through the lived experiences of ten minimally invasive nurses through one-on-one in-depth interviews were then analyzed. Utilizing purposive sampling for participant selection, information collected from thorough individual interviews was analyzed utilizing Van Manen's methodological framework. Three emergent themes were identified: Complexity of Care, Facing Challenges, and Promoting Safety. The findings can be used as a guide for improving interventions and programs to enhance the quality of care provided to patients and staff by recognizing the challenges and experiences of nurses. Ultimately, prioritizing adherence to these protocols not only safeguards patients, but also promotes accountability and excellence within the surgical healthcare environment through policy changes, training programs and further institutional improvements.

Keywords: *Nursing, Minimally Invasive Surgery, Hermeneutic-Phenomenology, Davao City*

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Introduction

Minimally invasive surgeries have replaced conventional open surgeries and gained popularity in the field of medicine. However, undergoing surgery can still be a frightening experience for patients, who may face preoperative issues such as anxiety and unfamiliarity with the procedure (Leeds et al., 2020). Despite advancements in technology, preoperative doubt and fear still exist among patients. Studies have focused on safety in healthcare settings, but little is known about

how nurses minimize risk in the perioperative setting. Minimally invasive surgeries have shown promising outcomes and are gradually becoming the new standard despite initial unfamiliarity (Shao et al., 2022). Patient teaching and counseling by preoperative nurses have played a crucial role in addressing patient concerns and ensuring successful surgical outcomes (Shen et al., 2022).

Patient counseling before surgeries has become a protocol globally and is usually reiterated by preoperative nurses during their

preoperative visits (Jain et al., 2021). According to Reddy (2021), The World Health Organization (WHO) standardized a preoperative surgical safety checklist indicating vital details necessary for every unique procedure that's to be done on patients. This has become an international preoperative protocol and has become famous for raising concerns that help in patient care and surgical safety preoperatively.

Meanwhile, in the Philippine setup, preoperative rounds or visits are done using protocols adhering to respective institutions. Private hospitals have unique preoperative checklists and conduct preoperative rounds per their institution's operating protocols (Pedres, 2020). A study conducted at Southern Philippines Medical Center was done recently, wherein a pretest was administered upon patients' admission to their respective wards whilst they were diagnosed and scheduled for surgery. Posttest and evaluation were done 2 to 3 hours after the preoperative visit, and counseling was done. The result of the study mentioned above showed a significant alleviation of patient anxiety and increased understanding and awareness of their planned surgery (Philippine Council for Health Research and Development, 2020).

Preoperative nursing protocols not only alleviate psychological issues but also reduce any possible post-surgical complications and help in recovery (Yang et al., 2022). In light of that, preoperative nurses' responsibilities are essential in caring for surgical patients, not just during and after their surgery but from the get-go. This study aims to contribute to the current study and research by investigating the lived experiences of minimally invasive surgery nurses and reiterating the importance of their preoperative safety protocol through preoperative rounds and counseling.

Methods

This study employed the hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research methodology. This approach explored participants' lived experiences through one-on-one in-depth interviews and later interpreted the meanings they ascribe to those experiences. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research question. The study targeted MIS nurses working in the operating rooms of hospitals in Davao City, selected through a purposive sampling method with the following criteria: they must be currently employed as operating room nurses. They must have been specialized MIS nurses for more than 3 years. They must also be at least 20 years old and above and willfully submit their consent for this study. This timeframe ensured that they have faced and managed the challenges of providing care for this particular group of patients. Number of specified participants is sufficient for achieving data saturation thus avoiding redundancy. Approval from ethics board, participant's confidentiality and anonymity were all ensured and reiterated during the entire process.

Additionally, in order to achieve the objective of this study, the following questions were asked: "What are the lived experiences of minimally invasive surgery nurses in rendering preoperative safety protocol for preoperative patients?", "How do minimally invasive surgery nurses cope with the possible challenges they experience?", "What improvement programs and insights should minimally invasive surgery nurses implement and share to achieve efficient preoperative safety protocol?". Seven in-depth one-on-one interviews were done, and three participated in a focused group discussion. Moreover,

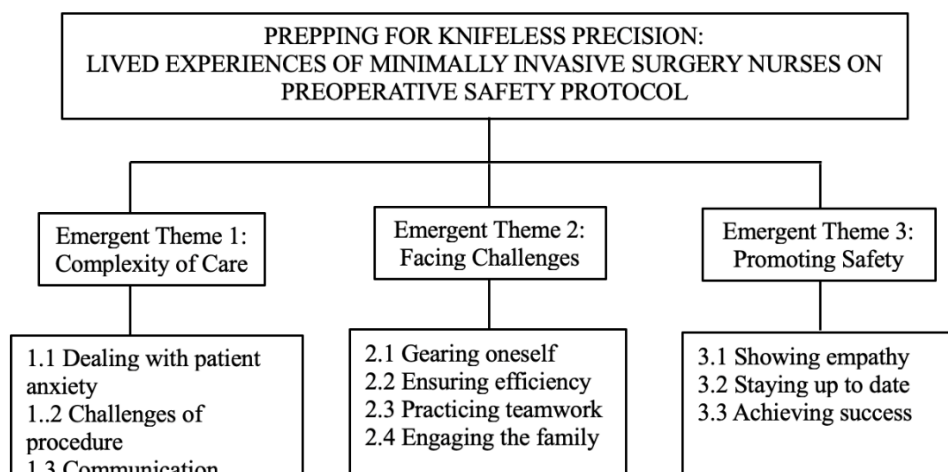
this study utilized Van Manen's 6-step approach to hermeneutic phenomenology data analysis. Through such method, the researcher formulated research questions which, when answered, were transcribed and put into themes, emergent and essential, which later provided further understanding for MIS nurses working in the preoperative setting on rendering efficient and improved preoperative safety protocol based on the accounts of their lived experiences.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Code	Gender	Years in Service	Clinical Work Area
IDI M1	Male	8	Operating Room
IDI M2	Male	8	Operating Room
IDI M4	Male	6	Operating Room
IDI M5	Male	4	Operating Room
IDI F3	Female	4	Operating Room
IDI F4	Female	3	Operating Room
IDI M6	Male	3	Operating Room
FGD F1	Female	7	Operating Room
FGD F2	Female	7	Operating Room
FGD M3	Male	6	Operating Room

Figure 1. Thematic Map



Results and Discussion

The participants' experiences were investigated through in-depth interviews, which focused on their accounts, specifically their perceptions, emotions, and realizations. The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, and common themes and patterns were later identified. Van Manen's methodological structure, rooted in phenomenology, offered a comprehensive framework for exploring the lived experiences of minimally invasive surgery nurses on preoperative safety protocol. After looking and familiarizing the responses, significant statements were extracted from transcriptions. Data was then organized into cluster themes. Themes were thoroughly reviewed to make sure that none of them overlap in meaning.

The cluster themes were later combined to form the general emergent themes. These themes aim to organize the lived experiences of the participants. The three themes extracted are: *Complexity of Care*, *Facing Challenges* and *Promoting Safety*. These themes capture the viewpoint of the participants in dealing with preoperative patients.

Emergent Theme 1: Complexity of Care

The first emerging theme is the *Complexity of Care*. It has come to the researcher's attention that minimally invasive surgeries, unlike traditional ones, require

nurses to prioritize adherence to patient safety protocols tailored to preoperative patient needs. Preoperative patient care and nurse responsibility begin upon admission to the hospital, not just upon entering the operating room. As previously mentioned, it is also a nurse's responsibility to assess their patients preoperatively. They should render preoperative counseling and teaching as necessary, taking into consideration that minimally invasive surgeries are different from traditional ones. Having said so, MIS nurses are expected to not simply abide by hospital protocols set out to ensure patient safety but also to familiarize themselves with the complexity of their procedures. This emergent theme was further broken down to more essential themes that cover vital aspects of their lived experiences. The first essential theme derived is "*Dealing with Patient Anxiety*" which mainly focused on how minimally invasive surgery nurses deal with preoperative anxiety. Second essential theme derived is "*Challenges of Procedure*" wherein often times complexity of surgical procedures also tantamount to complexity of care expected to be given. Third essential theme is "*Communication Problems*" in which is vital to be familiar with terminologies and understand them, primarily when terminologies are related to minimally invasive procedures.

Essential Theme 1.1 Dealing with Patient Anxiety

Although there are slim chances that MIS nurses face various challenges in the workplace, they are still expected to deal with any possible difficulties. Due to the complexity of care, minimally invasive surgeries require nurses, dubbed "angels in the sick room," to attend to patients' needs and contribute to their healing. The researcher, for one, attested to some accounts of the participants where they expressed their thoughts on having to deal with their

preoperative patient's anxiety. Patients brought to the hospital, especially those scheduled for operations, are most likely anxious about what's to be done to them. The researcher herself had to deal with patients who were anxious about the unknown and found herself in the shoes of her participants, wherein she had to assess and address preoperative patients' psychological and mental well-being. The researcher also makes sure that preoperative education is available, mainly when patient anxiety must be addressed. However, MIS nurses are only allowed to educate patients with knowledge within their scope. They must only fill in the dos and don'ts of operative nursing care, not educate them about the disease process.

Essential Theme 1.2 Challenges of Procedure

The second essential theme is the *Challenges of Procedure*. Given that minimally invasive surgeries are different from traditional ones, there is a possibility of dealing with any other challenges due to the complexity of every planned procedure. Preoperative safety protocol must be tailored to the procedure that has been planned for the patient. Everything that must be reiterated or educated to them should be relatable and understandable.

Medical terms should be used to a minimum; if not, they should be explained to the patient or recipient in layperson's terms. Another shared account from both the researcher's own experience and her participants is the instances wherein there is not enough time to dwell on patient education, especially if there are other tasks. Traditional surgeries are more straightforward to explain to preoperative patients than MIS ones since specific terms are too complex for non-medical people to understand. There were a few instances wherein the researcher got to deal with irate

preoperative patients who did not want to play any part in their upcoming surgery; meanwhile, some of them also showed no interest at all. This may be a manageable challenge from the procedure, not the complexity of the planned procedure itself.

However, minor incidences have a direct and possibly significant impact on the totality of preoperative care given. The importance of the preoperative safety protocol is to address any other possible concerns that may hinder MIS nurses from giving smooth and quality preoperative care.

Essential Theme 1.3 Communication Problems

The third essential theme is *Communication Problems*. Communication plays a vital role in achieving a common goal in every industry. It is vital to be familiar with terminologies and understand them, primarily when terminologies are related to minimally invasive procedures. Proper endorsement, anticipation of needs, and sufficient preparation should also be met. Oftentimes, notable endorsements and preparations are needed for minimally invasive surgeries. Minimally invasive surgery nurses should consider that as well.

The researcher believes that one must listen to understand, not simply listen to respond. Preoperative patients learn to trust their healthcare workers through proper communication with patients and not imposing biases on them. The researcher also agrees with one account, which mentioned that one must consider the importance of promoting a better understanding of what MIS nurses try to convey when rendering their preoperative safety protocol. One should know the essence of his actions to provide efficient care and avoid any other possible communication problems, miscommunications, and uncertainties.

Emergent Theme 2: Facing Challenges

The second emergent theme is *Facing Challenges*. MIS nurses can optimize patient outcomes, reduce preoperative risks, enhance patient satisfaction, and ensure a smooth transition from preoperative to intraoperative and post-operative care. Collaboration with other healthcare providers, especially surgeons and anesthesiologists, ensures organized patient-focused care and effective communication throughout the preoperative period. It is also vital for MIS nurses who perform safety protocols to be equipped and familiar with what they will discuss with the patient. They have to be knowledgeable and equipped to face any possible challenges.

This emergent theme was further broken down to more essential themes namely the following: “*Gearing Oneself*”, “*Ensuring Efficiency*”, “*Practicing Teamwork*” and “*Engaging the Family*”.

Essential Theme 2.1 Gearing Oneself

The first essential theme is *Gearing Oneself*. Nurses must have human qualities and excellent interpersonal and social relations in the surgical context, besides leadership and good communication (Becker A. et al., 2020). If the nurse conducting the preoperative safety protocol needs to be better equipped and knowledgeable, attending to a preoperative patient's needs and providing them safety may not be met.

Excellent provision of quality nursing care begins within the nurse himself. As specialized nurses, they are obliged to deliver the best of what they can. Preoperative patients are taken into special consideration given that they are to be exposed to something foreign to them, thus making them lend their trust fully. MIS nurses adhering to preoperative safety protocol are expected to do so. Their specialized skill sets are what

differentiates them from others. As for the researcher, gearing oneself is a commitment, not just some one-time deal after dealing with one patient. MIS nurses gear themselves with advanced, if not at least up-to-date, skills necessary for conducting preoperative safety protocol.

Essential Theme 2.2 Ensuring Efficiency

The second essential theme is *Ensuring efficiency*. By showing leadership and proactivity in the efficient use of preoperative safety protocol and adhering to strict implementation whilst encouraging collaboration, MIS nurses will be drawn in and, in this way, play a crucial role in setting standards for enhancing patient care. Observing proper and transparent communication whilst building a trusting relationship is also a way of ensuring efficiency. Ensuring that terms that are unfamiliar and too medical for a patient to understand should also be explained. Promptly attending to preoperative patients' concerns also gauges efficiency.

MIS nurses are integral in ensuring efficiency in adhering to preoperative safety protocol. As for the researcher, MIS nurses' commitment to excellence and strict adherence to established safety protocols benefits patients and enhances the overall quality of operative care within the healthcare system. Acknowledging patient's concerns and how to address each is vital.

Essential Theme 2.3 Practicing Teamwork

The third essential theme is *Practicing Teamwork*. Collaboration with colleagues is an effective strategy to cope with any possible challenges that may come along the way. By working together effectively and leveraging each other's skills and expertise, healthcare professionals, such as MIS nurses adhering to preoperative safety protocol, can cope with more challenges

efficiently and aim for improved patient outcomes. Shared knowledge from their lived experiences can help in problem identification, problem-solving, and decision-making practices that address challenges arising from the preoperative period. Collaboration creates a support network where they can encourage and assist each other during challenging times. Engaging in collaborative efforts with those who share similar lived experiences also offers opportunities for professional growth and development. According to Fratto et al. (2023), adherence to interventions that impact communication, coordination, consistency, and collaboration among all involved healthcare providers ensures the delivery of safe and efficient preoperative safety protocol.

Practicing teamwork through collaboration is an effective strategy for providing efficient preoperative safety protocol and a fundamental principle underpinning safe and patient-centered care. Guided by the accounts of their lived experiences, they can develop a culture of continuous learning and shared responsibility wherein they can smoothly and successfully navigate through complexities and challenges in the preoperative setting.

Essential Theme 2.4 Engaging the Family

The fourth essential theme is *Engaging the Family*. In the healthcare setting, involving the family of a preoperative patient in the care process is crucial for ensuring optimal outcomes and patient well-being. Oftentimes, engaging their family members offers the patient a sense of support and reassurance. This could also facilitate communication and enhance education concerning the patient's preoperative status and/or concerns, ensuring that all involved parties are well-informed about the preoperative process, potential risks, and

post-operative care instructions. Preoperative counseling aims to alleviate the patients' fears and provide psychological preparation for the treatment experience for the patient and the family (Kurian et al., 2023). Involving the family members whilst adhering to rendering preoperative safety protocol provides an opportunity for healthcare providers to educate them about the preoperative process itself and even shed light on any potential complications and post-operative care.

Engaging the family in rendering the preoperative safety protocol is essential for promoting patient-centered care, enhancing open communication, and fostering a supportive environment throughout the surgical process. By acknowledging their family's role as partners in the care continuum, MIS nurses can ensure a more comprehensive and patient-focused approach to rendering preoperative safety protocol. The researcher believes that through family involvement, MIS nurses can adopt a holistic approach to care that considers the patient's social, emotional, and psychological needs, aiding their physical well-being. Patient and family education also empowers them to take an active role in caring for their loved ones and ensure they are well-prepared for any challenges. By rendering preoperative safety protocol, MIS nurses can also develop care practices and decisions tailored to meet the unique cultural and religious needs of the patient and their family.

Emergent Theme 3: Promoting Safety Outcomes

The third emergent theme is *Promoting Safety Outcomes*. Minimally invasive surgery nurses are specialized nurses who play a vital role in ensuring the safety and well-being of preoperative patients undergoing minimally invasive procedures. Patients who are to undergo minimally invasive surgeries are exposed to

laparoscopic machines, which may all seem unfamiliar. By focusing on a much more comprehensive patient preoperative preparation, verifying surgical details, coordinating and collaborating healthcare team efforts, and adhering to efficient preoperative safety protocol, MIS nurses contribute to enhancing not just mere patient safety but also essential clinical and surgical outcomes.

This emergent theme was broken down into the following essential themes: “*Showing Empathy*”, “*Staying up to Date*” and “*Achieving Success*”.

Essential Theme 3.1 Showing Empathy

The first essential theme is *Showing Empathy*. Along with providing and rendering physical safety, MIS nurses prioritize patients' psychological comfort and emotional support before surgery. They may provide (necessary) reassurance, address anxieties, and create an environment that promotes trust, well-being, and empathy. As MIS nurses, they may provide support to patients in both physical and emotional aspects by encouraging communication, establishing rapport, and building trust. Preoperative counseling aims to alleviate the patients' fears and provide psychological preparation for the treatment experience for the patient and the family (Kurian et al., 2023).

Serving as a patient advocate by addressing patient concerns, ensuring their comfort, respecting their dignity and rights, and promoting shared decision-making throughout the preoperative process is vital as an MIS nurse adhering to preoperative safety protocol. Sympathizing with them means listening to understand, not to respond and impose one's own biases.

Essential Theme 3.2 Staying Up To Date

Advancing knowledge and skills is crucial for MIS nurses to stay updated and abreast of the latest developments in minimally invasive procedures, healthcare practices, and protocols. They can improve patient outcomes by delivering high-quality care and utilizing best practices from evidence-based research and/or practices. This can give them a sense of fulfillment in that their efforts would eventually pay off, mainly if they are acknowledged by their patients and by those they collaborate with within the healthcare team. The field of minimally invasive surgeries is rapidly evolving with advancements in technology, equipment, and techniques. To remain competitive and efficient in their specialization, they must continuously update their skills and knowledge, which can benefit themselves or their patients.

Based on the respondents' accounts, hands-on clinical experience and their lived experiences played a vital role in how they've become good at what they do best. They collaborate with surgeons, anesthesiologists, and other healthcare professionals to enhance their skills further and hone their critical thinking and decision-making abilities. The researcher strongly believes that MIS nurses should always be open to criticism and continuous training and education, given that medical practices evolve through time. Given that minimally invasive surgeries have been dubbed "surgeries of tomorrow," MIS nurses should equip themselves with more than what's expected of them.

Essential Theme 3.3 Achieving Success

The third essential theme is *Achieving success*. To advance themselves in their career and elevate their knowledge and skills, MIS nurses adhering to preoperative safety protocol may consider observing the following: (1) Invest in continuous learning and education, (2) Collaborate with various

members of the healthcare team who are hands-on with preoperative patients, Lastly, (3) Engage in research projects and quality improvement initiatives related to rendering efficient preoperative safety protocol.

Nurses contribute to patient improvement, whether it be providing quality care, ensuring patient safety, or adhering to protocols. By proactively seeking opportunities for learning, growth, and skills enhancement, MIS nurses can elevate their preoperative practice, enhance patient care outcomes, position themselves for success in the dynamic and challenging field of minimally invasive surgery nursing, and advance their careers to new heights.

Recommendation for Future Researcher

For MIS nurses to render efficient preoperative safety protocol, they should not simply abide by any existing protocol but rather equip themselves with every necessary skill, knowledge, and competency. Dealing with anxious patients and often irate family members is very common; thus, they should also possess patience while establishing a trusting relationship with them. Comprehending their methods of dealing with stress is equally important because it is essential for creating strategies and/or initiatives to strengthen emotional resilience and promote efficiency and collaborative effort among healthcare personnel, which may help reduce possible challenges.

Collaborative efforts could also foster patient-focused care from family members who will care for the patient at home. The development of communication training programs and equipping nurses with the communication skills necessary to foster open and compassionate dialogue with families aren't far from hindsight.

Ethical dilemmas nurses face in caring for preoperative patients should also

be addressed. Decision-making, obtaining consent, patient education, patient counseling, and other ethical gray areas surrounding preoperative safety protocol should also be explored to limit difficulties and challenges. By examining these dilemmas, researchers can contribute to refining ethical frameworks and critical decision-making processes of MIS nurses who render preoperative safety protocols.

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