

**OP 31**

**Nurses’ experiences of caring for patients with COVID 19: A phenomenological study in Sri Lanka**

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**Background:** Nurses have faced different challenges during the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as they are the frontline of care.

**Objective:** To explore the experiences of nurses who worked with patients with COVID-19 in Sri Lanka.

**Method:** A phenomenological study was conducted among a purposive sample of 14 nurses who cared for patients diagnosed with COVID-19 in Sri Lanka. In-depth telephone interviews were conducted using an interview guide. The sample size was based on the data saturation principle. Nurses who had experience in caring for at least one patient diagnosed with COVID-19 in the public sector hospitals/units were included. Thematic analysis was conducted based on the seven steps of Colaizzi’s phenomenological approach.

**Results:** The sample consisted of one male and 13 female nurses. Five key themes and their attendant sub-themes were identified. Five themes included physical and psychological distress of nurses; willingness to work; the essential role of support mechanisms; educational and informational needs of nurses, and the role of modern technology in COVID-19 care.

**Conclusion:** Nurses have faced different challenges when providing care for patients with COVID-19. Distress among nurses during the COVID-19 crisis is affected by multiple factors. Strengthening the coping mechanisms of nurses and expanding counselling services are essential. Although, nurses reported a higher level of stress, care provision has led to personal satisfaction with their commitments and professional obligation. The main support networks for nurses were support received from managers, peers, co-workers, family, friends and neighbours. Breaking bad news, donning and doffing personal protective equipment and performing nursing procedures were the main learning needs of nurses. Providing adequate training is essential for nurses, and nursing educational institutes need to pay attention to the above learning needs in curriculum revisions. Modern technology, including robots and telecommunication, can be incorporated into health crises like COVID-19.