

Abstract

Aims and objectives: To describe individual experiences of patients using the bedpan in an acute care setting.

Background: Patients describe the use of the bedpan often as uncomfortable and painful, and nurses mention difficulties using standard-sized bedpans for obese patients or removing a bedpan without soiling the bed. Although the bedpan is still regularly used in hospitals, there are few empirical studies that confirm these experiences.

Design: A descriptive quantitative research design.

Methods: A convenience sample of 78 patients was recruited, and data were collected using a standardised questionnaire (German version of the Bedpan Ongemak Schaal). Descriptive statistics were used to analyse frequency (scale A) and extent of inconvenient experiences (scale B). Internal consistency of the scales was tested using Cronbach's alpha.

Results: A major finding of the study was that most patients felt dependent on other persons and no autonomous movement was possible on the bedpan. Patients were frequently confronted with pain, inconvenient characteristics of the bedpan (e.g. coldness, hardness), uncomfortable positions and hygiene inconveniences (e.g. wet backside, fear that urination may miss the bedpan).

Conclusion: As the bedpan is still regularly used in acute care hospitals, innovations in bedpan models are necessary to address the problems. But there are also several courses of action nurses should consider when caring for patients who are dependent on the bedpan. Relevance for clinical practice. The discomfort of the bedpan, the feeling of dependency and embarrassment could lead to undesirable patient reactions, such as avoidance of fluid intake or leaving the bed. If nurses know the reasons for this behaviour, they could meet these problems with empathetic understanding.