ICU Survivors’ Experiences with Self-Managing Post-ICU Symptoms and Treatments

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**Abstract:**

Five million Americans are admitted to intensive care units (ICU) annually due to life-threatening illness or injury. Patients are exposed to interventions that reduce ICU mortality resulting in an increased number of ICU survivors. These interventions cause extreme physical and emotional stress that predispose patients to subsequent physical, cognitive, and psychological symptoms for months to years and, collectively, diminish ICU survivors’ quality of life and health. Little is known about how survivors self-manage symptoms and treatments at home where they receive little systematic, structured support. Our purpose is to describe ICU survivors’ experiences with self-managing symptoms and treatments after hospitalization. A convenience sample of 30 English speaking ICU survivors age > 40 years who were mechanically ventilated in the ICU for > 48 hours and discharged to home will be recruited. A semi-structured interview guide specifically designed for this descriptive phenomenology study will be our main data collection tool. Participants will be interviewed two weeks after arriving home and via telephone two weeks later. Interviews will be digitally audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Data will be analyzed using seven-step analysis process as described by Porter. Results will be used for developing survivor-focused interventions that can be tested and translated into practice.