

## Protecting Dignity in Intimate Nursing Care

This letter is in response to the article “The challenges of Iranian female nurses caring for male patients: A qualitative study” published in your esteemed journal.<sup>[1]</sup> The study explores an unsettling topic as female nurses in culturally diverse settings struggle to care for male patients. This commentary examines the value of protecting dignity in intimate nursing care.

To begin with, patients frequently opt for the same gender to provide privacy and satisfaction.<sup>[2]</sup> Bathing is an example. The goal of “same-gender care whenever feasible” may improve patient comfort and relaxation. This would improve the dignity and well-being of the patients and nurses. However, is this feasible? The short answer is yes, but not always. Therefore, in this context, the role of nurse managers is essential. Two practical considerations illustrate such a role.

First, the nurse management may wish to keep at least one male nurse on each shift. If this is impossible, because of a smaller percentage of male nurses in rural areas, for example, then at least one male nurse should ideally be present during a specific shift, typically during the scheduled hygiene care. Thus, nurses can always provide dignified care. We should, however, be mindful of overvaluing male nurses, particularly when it involves gender-based roles.<sup>[3]</sup> Next, involving close family in physical care may also help. This protects patient dignity and improves privacy and comfort. To ensure that family members are involved in as much physical care as possible, nurses must recognise them as partners in care in tandem with institutional policies and patient preferences.<sup>[4]</sup> If family is not available, a nursing assistant may be needed.<sup>[5]</sup>

In summary, this study underscored female nurses’ care challenges,<sup>[1]</sup> requiring alternative arrangements for same-gender care. This is crucial for practising cultural competence and cultural humility in patient care.<sup>[6]</sup> Practical solutions and nuanced policies must be adopted simultaneously to retain nurses’ dignity and compassion.

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### Conflicts of interest

Nothing to declare.

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