

**A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
INQUIRY INTO THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF  
MUSLIM PATIENTS IN AUSTRALIAN  
HOSPITALS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the past few years, many people with an Islamic background have settled in Australia. Within the health care context, this means that health care providers must modify the care provided to ensure it meets the needs of this culturally diverse population. Little nursing research has focused on understanding the perceptions and experiences of Muslim people within health care systems, particularly in Australia. This study provided an opportunity to explore, and document the experience of the hospitalisation for Islamic people and thereby advance the available information upon which important nursing care decisions that relate to this group can be more informatively made.

This study aims to explore and interpret the lived experience of thirteen Muslim patients who had been hospitalised in an Australian hospital. The hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger (1967/1996), the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer (1989), and the ideas of van Manen (1990/1996) underpin this study. The meaning and understanding of the everyday experience of Muslim patient in a non-Islamic hospital is achieved through interpretation of the participants' stories. Data were generated using unstructured audio-taped interviews from participants. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed, then interpreted using phenomenological methods.

The two themes to emerge from the participants' experiences are: *Being-thrown-into-an-un-everyday-world* and *living-Islam-in-the-un-everyday-world*. The theme of *Being-thrown-into-an-un-everyday-world* arose from the sub-themes of the awareness of self and *Being an outsider*. The theme *living-Islam-in-the-un-everyday-world* was drawn from the three sub-themes of *Being the same and different*, *hindrances to being Muslim*, and *adapting-to-the-un-everyday-world*.

The findings of this study provide an insight into the experience of Muslims being cared for in Australian hospitals. It is hoped that this interpretation will make a significant contribution to the care of Muslim patients by having health professionals consider how this group could be cared for in a culturally sensitive manner. It is not intended as a prescription for care but draws the reader to reflect on aspects of the Muslim faith and



how this may impact on individuals experience when in hospital. The scope of this study and the dearth of available research in this area conclude that much more research needs to be undertaken.

# **DECLARATION**

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE**

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying

Signed:

Dated:

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

It has always been my goal to write a doctoral thesis, one day...! For many years it did not look favourable at all: first being the father of three teenagers, something I never regretted but also something that does not make academic life easily attainable. In addition, I had to confront personal set-back, family problems, change a country, change of lifestyle, change of language and many other things that in the end proved not to be real impediments but rather learning opportunities. But of course, this research journey would not have been possible if it were not for the support of family members and many friends. Without acknowledging those individuals who assisted me in this process, this dissertation would not be completed. Besides I have now reached a stage where I can regard the people I met my path as people who taught me something, sometimes the hard way. I would like to thank them all for giving me this opportunity.

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Adelaide, August 2007

Nooredin Mohammadi

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to Muslim patients and those health professionals who care for them. In particular, I dedicate this work to the thirteen volunteered Muslim patients who shared their stories so willingly and openly with me.

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