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Rethinking nursing care: An ethnographic approach to nurse-patient interaction in the context of a HIV prevention programme in rural Tanzania

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### **Abstract**

### Background

While care has been described as the essence of nursing, it is generally agreed that care is a complex phenomenon that remains elusive. Literature reviews highlight the centrality of nurse-patient interactions in shaping care. In sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a critical shortage of health workers, nurses remain the core of the health workforce, but the quality of the patient care they provide has been questioned.

The study explored how care is shaped, expressed and experienced in nurses' everyday communication among HIV positive women in Tanzania.

## Study context

Data were collected through a prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV programme with a comprehensive community component conducted by a church-run hospital in rural Tanzania. The population is largely agro-pastoral, the formal educational level is low and poverty is rampant.

# Methods

An ethnographic approach was employed. Nurses and women enrolled in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV programme were followed closely over a period of nine months in order to explore their encounters and interactions.

# Findings and discussion

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provided by Digital barry of the Tanzaria Health Cormunity engagement were experienced as caring interactions. The findings from this study demonstrate that the quality of nursing care needs to be explored within the specific historical, socio-cultural context in which it is practised.

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