

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL WORK AND NURSING COLLABORATION ON PATIENT OUTCOMES IN EMERGENCY ROOMS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF WAITING EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This systematic study investigates the impact of collaboration between social work and nursing experts on patient outcomes in emergency rooms, with a focus on patient waiting experiences. Overcrowding and high patient traffic are common characteristics of emergency departments (EDs), which can have a negative impact on patient satisfaction and overall service quality. The merger of social work and nursing has the potential to improve healthcare delivery by addressing social determinants of health, controlling patient flow, and offering psychosocial support. A thorough search of numerous academic databases revealed six relevant papers published between 2022 and 2024 that matched the inclusion criteria. The findings revealed that strong communication and interdisciplinary coordination among social workers and nurses are critical for minimizing patient wait times and enhancing overall patient experiences. Negative staff interactions, inadequate training, and systemic problems have all been recognized as barriers to successful collaboration. Improving these interprofessional partnerships could dramatically improve the quality of care in emergency circumstances. Future research should focus on particular collaborative models and tactics to develop teamwork among healthcare providers in emergency departments, with the ultimate goal of creating a more streamlined and patient-centered approach to emergency treatment.

Keywords: Impact Social, Work, Nursing, Collaboration, Patient Outcomes, Emergency Rooms.

Introduction

Emergency departments (EDs) and clinical settings, in general, have been characterized as complex, overwhelming, and distressing environments for an extended period of time (Rowe & Knox, 2023). The area of research and focus for health-care leaders is the patient experience with emergency department (ED) care, which is rapidly expanding (Sonis et al., 2018).

Patients are triaged upon arrival at the emergency department (ED), where they are evaluated and assigned a category according to the urgency of their care needs. In the event that a treatment space is unavailable, patients may be assigned to the waiting room, where they are typically attended to by the triage nurse (Innes et al., 2021). Emergency care providers should prioritize patient experience, as it is positively correlated with both clinical effectiveness and patient safety (Graham

et al., 2019). Crowding in emergency departments serves as a sentinel indicator of the health system's efficiency (Kelen et al., 2021). Although the impact of ED crowding on avoidable patient morbidity and mortality is well documented, it is often dismissed as a trivial inconvenience for patients and remains largely underappreciated (Kelen et al., 2021).

Social workers facilitate the establishment of connections between various professions and organizational systems in order to enhance the quality of health care for both individuals and populations (Browne, 2019). The quality of care and the welfare of patients have been enhanced through the implementation of teamwork (Ghezeljeh et al., 2021). Social workers are essential in integrated healthcare models, as they address behavioral health, psychosocial, and physical healthcare concerns, thereby enhancing the outcomes of patients and communities (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Situations in which patient care is administered in emergency department (ED) waiting rooms have resulted from inadequate resources, overcrowding, and an increasing demand (Robinson, 2024). Nurses are essential in the delivery of clinical care and the management of patient flow, while social workers are uniquely situated to address the social determinants of health and provide psychosocial support (Dimla et al., 2023). One approach to optimize resources, improve quality and safety, and bridge healthcare fragmentation is to foster collaboration and communication among a variety of professionals from different providers, organizations, and sectors (Moncatar et al., 2021). Working with the values and beliefs of the nurses involved is necessary to enhance interprofessional team triage (Dreher-Hummel et al., 2021). Consideration must be given to the assets of both professions, and a collaborative approach that is adaptable to the patients' circumstances should be established (Dreher-Hummel et al., 2021).

Emergency rooms are frequently overcrowded, which poses a challenge for nurses in their ability to deliver high-quality, secure health services to patients (Kongcheep et al., 2022). The quality of care provided can be enhanced by gaining a better comprehension of the phenomenon of overcrowded emergency rooms through the investigation of the experiences of nurses (Kongcheep et al., 2022). Emergency care has expanded to include waiting rooms in certain emergency departments (Innes et al., 2018). The objective of waiting room nurses is to initiate care early, reassess patients, and enhance communication between patients, families, and staff. They are frequently perceived as an adjunct to triage (Innes et al., 2018). Patient waiting time is defined as the amount of time patients spend at each service point as well as their entire stay at a facility (Abrahams, 2022). According to studies, long wait times are connected with worse patient satisfaction (Abrahams, 2022). Clinical nurse specialists improve patient outcomes in Saudi Arabia by offering specialized care and experience in a variety of medical settings (Mohammed Shareifi et al., 2024).

Despite the widely acknowledged value of interdisciplinary collaboration in improving patient outcomes in emergency settings, there is still a considerable gap in knowing the influence of social work and nursing collaboration, particularly on patient waiting experiences. The current literature focuses primarily on individual professional practices, with few systematic investigations investigating the aggregate effect of interprofessional collaboration on patient satisfaction and wait

times. Furthermore, the intricacies of how social workers and nurses work together in emergency departments to manage waiting times, address social determinants of health, and provide psychosocial support are not adequately addressed. This knowledge gap impedes the development of focused interventions to improve quality of treatment and patient satisfaction in emergency settings. This study seeks to close this gap by conducting a systematic review of the impact of social work and nursing collaboration on patient waiting experiences in emergency rooms, thereby contributing to evidence-based practices and, ultimately, improving the quality of care provided to patients in these high-pressure settings.

Methods

Introduction

This systematic review sought to examine and synthesize available evidence on the influence of collaboration between social work and nursing professionals on patient outcomes in emergency room settings, with a specific emphasis on waiting times. The review followed established systematic review procedures to ensure that the findings were reliable, credible, and applicable to interdisciplinary emergency care practices. The procedure included a well-defined search strategy, specified inclusion and exclusion criteria, and a systematic data extraction mechanism for relevant literature produced between 2022 and 2024.

Search Strategy

A planned and methodical methodology was used to discover and filter relevant studies. A comprehensive search was undertaken across multiple academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using specified keywords such as "social work and nursing collaboration," "patient outcomes," and "emergency room waiting experiences." This search returned a large number of articles, which were handled and categorized with reference management software to reduce duplication. The titles and abstracts of the retrieved studies were then checked against the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Full-text reviews were performed on studies that either clearly satisfied the inclusion criteria or did not meet the exclusion criteria. This entailed carefully evaluating chosen publications to ensure their relevance to the review's objectives, particularly those addressing the effects of collaborative practices on patient experiences and outcomes in emergency room settings. To ensure neutrality and consistency throughout the selection process, the screening and assessment were undertaken by two independent reviewers. Any disagreements among the reviewers were settled through conversation, resulting in a rigorous selection process. Finally, our rigorous methodology revealed a specific corpus of literature aimed at better understanding the collaborative contributions of social work and nursing in emergency care settings.

Inclusion Criteria:

Certain criteria were devised to ensure that featured studies remained relevant and of high quality. Papers submitted for inclusion have to be quantitative studies published between 2022 and 2024. They needed to concentrate on emergency room settings in healthcare facilities and incorporate perspectives from both social workers and nursing specialists. Studies must show evidence of

collaborative interventions, their execution, and the influence on patient outcomes, notably waiting times. Eligible studies must be authored in English.

Exclusion criteria

Research that did not meet the established criteria was excluded from this systematic review. Non-peer-reviewed work with insufficient data and qualitative studies were excluded. Articles that were not specifically about emergency room settings or focused on collaborative practices between social work and nursing were omitted. Furthermore, research conducted outside of these defined healthcare environments or that did not evaluate the influence of collaboration on patient outcomes in terms of waiting times were excluded. Publications in languages other than English were eliminated to ensure that the research team could effectively comprehend and analyze the data. These exclusion criteria were developed to ensure a targeted and relevant selection of research, with the ultimate goal of gaining a full understanding of the combined impact of social work and nursing in emergency care settings.

The Selection Process

A search conducted in 2024 produced 120 results. After removing duplicates, 70 studies remained. After evaluating the titles and abstracts, 55 papers were excluded because they did not match the set inclusion criteria. As a result, 15 papers underwent a complete full-text review to determine eligibility; 9 were rejected due to insufficient original inquiry details. As a result, the final systematic review included six studies (Figure 1).

Data Extraction

The review search contained detailed information about all titles and abstracts, the use of inclusion and exclusion criteria, reasons for study selection and rejection, and the elimination of duplicates. A PRISMA flowchart was constructed to show the sequential stages of the systematic review methodology. Figure 1 depicts the steps involved in conducting the review.

Results

According to a qualitative exploratory study looking into communication and information exchange between emergency medical teams (EMTs) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, there is a significant lack of understanding of these important interactions during emergencies. The study included 62 respondents from the Saudi Red Crescent Authority and hospital emergency departments, who were interviewed using semi-structured questions to gain perspectives from staff allowed to interact during emergencies. Thematic analysis revealed three central factors affecting coordination and communication: (1) the emotional impact on the performance of the SRCA staff, which significantly influences the quality of information shared; (2) the limited effectiveness of existing communication systems among EMTs, compounded by technical issues and the informal nature of some communication methods; and (3) a lack of preparation and training for emergency management, with insufficient focus. The findings emphasize that efficient communication in emergency medical situations requires not just modern technology, but also better coordination and understanding among EMTs. To improve these elements, directors, managers, and

policymakers must appreciate the value of excellent communication networks and their role in promoting efficient emergency response and catastrophe management (Al-Shehri et al., 2022). According to a report on the theoretical foundations, implementation techniques, and outcomes of value-based care (VBC) models, nursing and emergency administration play critical roles in improving healthcare delivery. The study examines a wide range of case studies, policy documents, and peer-reviewed literature to determine how nursing professionals and emergency administrators contribute to the development, implementation, and evaluation of VBC models. The study found that VBC models dramatically improve patient satisfaction, improve chronic illness management, and minimize hospital readmissions. Nursing interventions, such as patient education and transitional care coordination, are critical in obtaining these desirable outcomes. Emergency administrators play an important role in implementing VBC by optimizing staff training, effectively allocating resources, and coordinating regulations. However, the investigation identifies ongoing impediments, such as data management inefficiencies, resistance to change, and health equity issues. The paper concludes that, while value-based care models hold promise for revolutionizing healthcare delivery by aligning incentives with patient outcomes, realizing their full potential requires coordinated efforts from nursing, emergency administration, and technological innovation to overcome existing challenges and ensure equitable care across diverse populations (Alamri et al., 2023).

A qualitative case study of teamwork practices among emergency department (ED) staff in a public hospital in Saudi Arabia's Northern Borders region found that teamwork is an important strategy for improving patient safety, quality of care, and satisfaction among both patients and staff. Despite the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in the emergency department (ED), which is characterized by high service demand and the risk of human error, there has been a lack of research on the perceptions and experiences of ED personnel in Saudi Arabia, including physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and administrative staff. The study used a mixed-method approach, including documentary reviews, semi-structured interviews with 22 staff members, and six non-participant observations, to identify ten major themes that emphasized both barriers and enablers of effective teamwork. While a shared goal of patient care, reduced employee stress, and increased job satisfaction were discovered to promote interdisciplinary collaboration, challenges such as negative staff behaviors, staff shortages, insufficient management support, and cultural factors such as gender interactions and language barriers hampered teamwork effectiveness. The findings emphasized the need of efficient communication, multitasking, stress management, and leadership abilities in boosting teamwork activities. Furthermore, the study discovered that individual variables, which are not included in existing frameworks, have a major impact on interdisciplinary teamwork in the emergency department (Alanazi, 2024).

According to a study that examined the collaborative roles of administrators, health security officers, nurses, and social workers in addressing social determinants of health (SDOH) in hospital settings, incorporating SDOH into clinical practice is critical for improving health equity and reducing disparities. The report emphasizes that hospitals are key players in this effort, needing interdisciplinary coordination among diverse healthcare experts. Administrators are responsible

for allocating resources and setting policies that support SDOH activities, whereas health security officers aim to create inclusive environments that meet the different requirements of their patients. Nurses are key in detecting and resolving patients' social needs, while social workers play an important role in linking people to critical community resources. The study emphasizes the importance of overcoming hurdles like fragmented care and limited resources through cooperation and integrated techniques in order to provide fair and holistic healthcare. By effectively addressing concerns such as housing, food security, and access to care, healthcare systems can greatly improve patient outcomes and contribute to a more equal health environment (Anqi et al., 2024).

According to recent research, hospital nursing staff, particularly those working in emergency departments, suffer considerable hurdles as a result of overwork, which has a negative impact on patient care and outcomes. To address this, there is an urgent need for initiatives that reduce needless emergency department (ED) visits and improve nursing care. One interesting method is the use of mobile apps and sensors to give nurses with situational awareness and decision support via simple visual clues. The study evaluates this mobile solution using a quasi-experimental approach driven by intervention mapping, with an emphasis on its efficacy for advanced cancer patients. Preliminary findings imply that alternatives such as minor injury units could improve wait times and minimize ED visits for acute conditions, but the evidence is still of moderate quality, indicating that more high-quality research is needed. Future research should investigate resource utilization and patient opinions on new services, using a mixed-methods approach to conduct a thorough evaluation of various techniques for improving nursing care and patient outcomes (Mohammed et al., 2024).

According to a cross-sectional study conducted in four government hospitals in Hail, Emergency Department (ED) nurses' perceptions of the issues associated with their working environment revealed substantial areas for concern. Out of 175 registered nurses, 158 completed a closed-ended questionnaire designed to examine their attitudes. According to the findings, the majority of participants were young adults aged 23 to 29, largely female (88.6%), and obtained bachelor's degrees in nursing. Notably, a large majority of the nurses had 1-4 years of ED experience, indicating a young workforce. The findings revealed a broad negative opinion of their working environment, with 27.8% of nurses experiencing discomfort in their comfort zone. Nursing help, technician support, work shift hours, cleanliness, material quality, physician participation, and the number of calls each shift were recognized as important concerns, with a large percentage of respondents expressing discontent. The overall perception of emergency nurses was measured, with a mean score of 32.03 and a standard deviation of 5.6, indicating a troubling level of disenchantment. As a result, the study recommends that healthcare officials prioritize improvements in the working circumstances of ED nurses, as their perceptions reflect a negative environment. It also emphasizes the importance of hospitals reconsidering their operational rules, particularly those related to reimbursement and healthcare delivery procedures. This evidence may drive management to establish comprehensive improvement strategies aimed at improving working conditions in the emergency departments of the selected Hail hospitals (Al Aseeri, 2020).

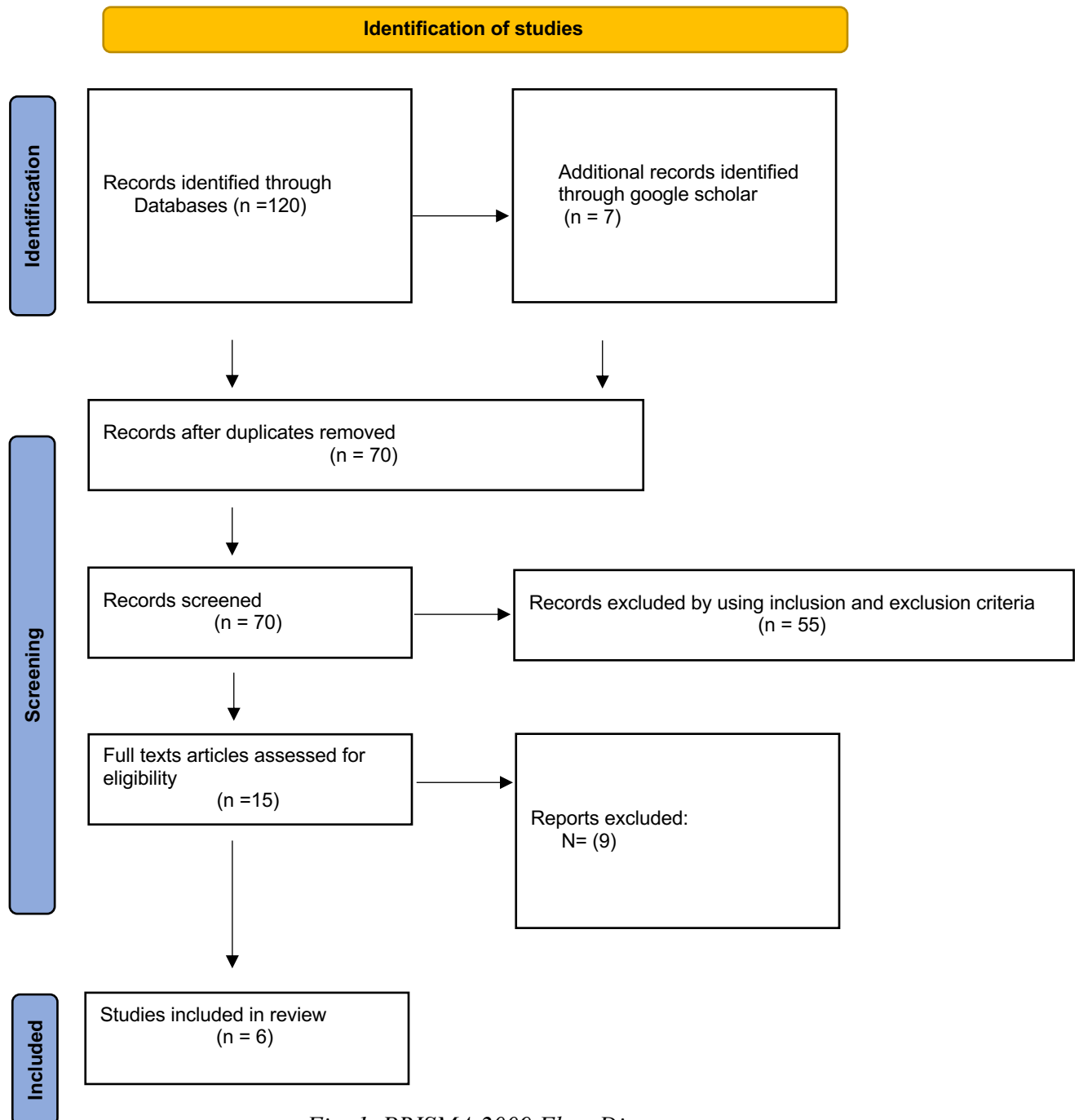


Fig. 1. PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram

Discussion

The merging of social work and nursing in emergency departments is becoming increasingly popular as healthcare systems throughout the world attempt to improve patient outcomes and expedite care operations. This chapter examines the dynamics of collaboration between social work and nursing in emergency situations, comparing research undertaken in Saudi Arabia (KSA) to those from other countries. Exploring these characteristics allows us to better appreciate the

problems and potential inherent in such collaborations, as well as the consequences for patient experiences, particularly in terms of waiting times and overall healthcare delivery.

Communication and coordination in emergency situations

The findings of Saudi research highlight substantial issues in communication and coordination among emergency medical teams (EMTs). Al-Shehri et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative exploratory study that identified difficulties such as a lack of understanding of communication protocols, emotional influences on performance, and inadequate emergency management training. These variables degrade the quality of information delivered at vital moments. In contrast, Ghezaljah et al.'s (2021) research in Iran emphasizes the importance of nurse cooperation in reducing missed nursing care. The substantial inverse relationship shown between cooperation and missed care suggests that increased collaboration leads to better patient care. This contrast implies that, while both Saudi Arabia and Iran understand the need of effective communication, KSA's emphasis on emotional and training elements may be due to specific cultural issues and different healthcare system structures.

In the context of value-based care (VBC), a deeper analysis finds major similarities and differences between Saudi and international findings. According to Alamri et al. (2023), VBC models in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia improve patient satisfaction, minimize hospital readmissions, and improve chronic illness management. These findings are consistent with international discussions about the benefits of VBC in fostering patient-centered care, as reported in research from many countries, including insights emphasized by ABUSAQ et al. (2023). However, a noticeable contrast arises in research such as Bronick's (2024), which investigated the impact of patient engagement techniques on wait times in family medicine and found that the findings were statistically negligible. This demonstrates that, while Saudi Arabia shows potential in implementing VBC principles, practical deployments of these models may differ globally, reflecting different approaches to healthcare delivery.

Teamwork in the Emergency Department

Alanazi (2024) delves deeper into the critical role of teamwork in emergency departments, identifying several barriers to effective collaboration in Saudi Arabia, such as negative staff behaviors, inadequate management support, and cultural factors that may impede teamwork among diverse healthcare professionals. In comparison, Labrague's (2024) study in the Philippines found that demographic characteristics have a favorable influence on nurses' caring abilities, which correlates with higher nursing care quality. While both studies recognize the importance of cooperation, the differing findings suggest that interventions in Saudi Arabia should focus on eliminating systemic impediments, whereas building individual nurse competencies elsewhere may provide a more rapid approach to improve patient outcomes. This is an excellent chance for KSA to learn from international methods that emphasize both individual and group improvements within nursing teams.

Addressing the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH).

The discussion of socioeconomic determinants of health (SDOH) shows discrepancies between Saudi Arabia and global studies. Anqi et al. (2024) discuss the collaborative roles of social workers and nurses in KSA, highlighting the importance of treating patients' social needs through integrated treatment. This collaboration is critical in developing a comprehensive approach to healthcare, especially in emergency situations where quick interventions can greatly improve results. In contrast, Nguyen et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of organizational improvements in Vietnam's social work services, citing critical areas such as patient needs assessment and professional development. While both environments emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary coordination, the Saudi method appears to include organized mechanisms more efficiently than the fragmented care models discussed in international settings. This indicates how KSA's cooperative frameworks can serve as models for other nations seeking to incorporate SDOH into healthcare procedures.

Impact of Work Environment on Employee Well-Being

The working conditions of emergency department staff have a significant impact on the quality of patient care. Al Aseeri (2020) uncovers concerning levels of dissatisfaction among emergency nurses in KSA, drawing attention to factors such as inadequate staffing, excessive workloads, and insufficient support from management. Similarly, research from numerous countries supports the link between staff morale and patient outcomes. For instance, Labrague's (2024) study on the Philippines indicates that higher levels of caring ability among nurses, influenced by their demographic factors, lead to improved patient care quality and fewer adverse events. This suggests a universal phenomenon wherein the work environment is a critical determinant of healthcare delivery. Addressing the systemic challenges facing KSA's emergency nursing workforce could yield substantial benefits, improving not only staff satisfaction but also overall patient care.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis of studies conducted in Saudi Arabia and other countries reveals both shared challenges and unique variations in how social work and nursing collaboration impact patient outcomes in emergency rooms. While the importance of effective communication, teamwork, value-based care, and attention to social determinants are universally acknowledged, cultural and systemic differences shape the practical applications of these concepts across contexts. The KSA exhibits a commitment to structured collaboration and response systems that could be beneficially adapted by other healthcare systems facing similar challenges. Future research should continue to explore these themes, focusing on best practices for enhancing interdisciplinary collaborations that not only improve patient outcomes but also foster a supportive and productive environment for healthcare professionals. This holistic approach is critical in addressing the complexities of modern healthcare delivery and ensuring the provision of equitable, high-quality care to all patients.

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