

## INTRODUCTION

Critical care is undergoing rapid changes. During these times of change, critical care nurses must maintain a focus on providing care to critically ill patients and their families and promoting a patient health care. **The American Association of critical care Nurses, AACN (2004)** defined critical care Nursing as the speciality within nursing that deals specifically with human responses to life-threatening problems.

In general, critical care Nursing is the art and science of helping patients with life-threatening problems. Nurses treat not just the ailment or illness, but the total well-being of the patient. A good nurse observes, evaluates and reacts to the changing condition of every critically ill patient. So the progress of a patient depends upon the right medication, treatment or therapy, and it is the responsibility of the nurse to assess, record, and interpret that progress to achieve the intended results. In addition many critically ill patients are hooked up to monitoring equipment and intravenous (I.V) that dispense life – saving fluids and medications (*The Institute of Research chicago, 2004* ).

A critical care unit is an area of the hospital that provides aggressive therapy, state of art technology and both invasive and non-invasive monitoring for critically ill and high-risk patients in these units thereby requiring intense and vigilant emergency nursing care (*Taha, 2004*).

Critical care nurses work in a wide variety of settings, filling many roles. They are bed side clinicians, nurse educators, nurse researchers, nurse practitioner and clinical nurse specialists (*Mbchb, 2004*). So, the

Nurses are key players in the critical care unit. Collaboration and integration of medical and nursing staff must be optimal.

**The American Association of critical care nurses (AACN) standards for critical care nurses (2004)** Provides the foundation for a minimum level of competent and professional care delivered to critically ill patients. These standards are as follows: assessment, Diagnosis, outcome identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation to patient progress toward attaining expected outcomes, triage and prioritization, stabilization and resuscitation, provision of care in uncontrolled or unpredictable environments.

Emergency nursing is care of individuals of all ages with perceived or actual physical or emotional alterations of Health that are undiagnosed or that require further intervention. Emergency nursing care is episodic, primary, and usually acute (*Newberry, 1998*). In emergency department, as in all areas of hospital, nurses are the primary care givers and advocates for all patients. Without nurses, there is no health care (*Wells, 2003*). It is important that they possess certain skills to be successful in this challenging specialty such as excellent and fast assessment skills, triage and prioritization, stabilization and resuscitation, emergency operations preparedness, ability to manage multiple projects / patients at one time, confident in a decision- making skills, technically proficient in a wide variety of medical procedures and supportive and caring for patients' and their families (*Emergency Nurses Association ENA, 2004*).

One challenge facing critical care units today is the need for efficient orientation of nursing staff. This is especially true because of the staffing pattern and the acuity of the patients' admitted to the critical care units which demands that nurses be qualified and highly experienced in

the care of critically ill patients (*Attia, 2003*). As a result to full participation by critical care nurses all aspects of the units' activities is a better care and cost-effective strategy for maximizing positive outcomes for patients and their families (*Carasa & Nespoli, 2002*). In Egypt, *Taha, (2004)* documented in her study that a requirement for continuous in-service training programs for the purpose of refreshing and updating the knowledge and performance of nurses working with critically ill patients, to be followed by continuous evaluation. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to examine the impact of a designed teaching protocol on nurses knowledge and practices as regards the emergency care of critically ill patients in intensive care units (I.C.U.s) at Benha university and Benha Teaching Hospitals.