Clinical Trial Protocol
Iranian Registry of Clinical Trials

08 Nov 2026

Determinate the effect of Moral Case Deliberation on understanding futile care and moral distress in nurses

Protocol summary

Study aim
Determining the impact of moral case deliberation on the perception of futile care and moral distress in nurses

Design
The present study is a randomized controlled clinical trial that will be conducted with the participation of 60 nurses working in the ICU wards of Imam Reza and Ghaem hospitals in Mashhad, with double-blind, parallel groups, phase 2.

Settings and conduct
For the MCD intervention group, the program will be conducted over three weekly sessions with groups of ten ICU nurses from Ghaem and Imam Reza hospitals in Mashhad; the first session will be held in person, while the second and third sessions will take place virtually (via Skyroom). For the control group, educational content regarding ethical considerations in intensive care will be made available online. Participants in both the intervention and control groups will complete the Soleimani Moral Distress Questionnaire and the Mohammadi Perceived Futile Care Questionnaire at three time points: prior to the intervention, immediately after the final MCD session, and two weeks following that session.

Participants/Inclusion and exclusion criteria
Inclusion criteria: Willingness to participate in the study, having at least six months of work experience in the intensive care unit, and currently working in the intensive care unit at the time of the study. Exclusion criteria: Unwillingness to continue participating in the study and missing at least one MCD session.

Intervention groups
In the MCD intervention group, which includes end-of-life care cases and patients in a vegetative state, it will be carried out in ten stages. In the control group, educational content related to ethical considerations in the intensive care unit will be uploaded.

Main outcome variables
Moral distress, perception of futile care

General information

Reason for update

Acronym
MCD

IRCT registration information
IRCT registration number: **IRCT20260622069909N1**
Registration date: **2026-07-12, 1405/04/21**
Registration timing: **prospective**

Last update: **2026-07-12, 1405/04/21**
Update count: **0**

Registration date
2026-07-12, 1405/04/21

Registrant information

Name
Elham Raoufi

Name of organization / entity

Country
Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Phone
+98 51 3884 6730

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Recruitment status
Recruitment complete

Funding source

Expected recruitment start date
2026-07-23, 1405/05/01

Expected recruitment end date
2026-08-23, 1405/06/01

Actual recruitment start date
empty

Actual recruitment end date
empty

Trial completion date
empty

Scientific title
Determinate the effect of Moral Case Deliberation on understanding futile care and moral distress in nurses

Public title
The effect of an ethical intervention on the perception of futile care and moral distress in nurses.

Purpose
Education/Guidance

Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:
Having consent to participate in the study At least six months of work experience in an intensive care unit. Working in the intensive care unit at the time of the study

Exclusion criteria:
Unwillingness to continue participating in the research Failure to attend at least one MCD meeting

Age
No age limit

Gender
Both

Phase
N/A

Groups that have been masked

- Participant
- Investigator
- Outcome assessor
- Data analyser

Sample size
Target sample size: **60**

Randomization (investigator's opinion)
Randomized

Randomization description
In this study, a clustered permuted-block method will be used to generate the random allocation sequence for assigning ICU centers to the study groups. The random allocation sequence for individuals will be generated using Random Allocation Software with random block sizes. Sealed envelopes will be used for allocation concealment.

Blinding (investigator's opinion)
Double blinded

Blinding description
Study units will be selected using a convenience sampling method based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of eight ICU units from two hospitals will be included in the study, with four units selected from each hospital via convenience sampling. Within each hospital, two ICU units will be assigned to the intervention group and two to the control group. Randomization of the ICU units within each hospital will be conducted separately using permuted blocks. The random allocation sequence will be generated using "Random Allocation Software" with random block sizes.To ensure allocation concealment, the allocation sequence will be placed in opaque, sealed, and numbered envelopes, such that those administering the intervention remain unaware of the group assigned to the ICU sections until the intervention is actually performed.

Placebo
Not used

Assignment
Crossover

Other design features

Secondary Ids

empty

Ethics committees

1

Ethics committee

Name of ethics committee
Ethics committee of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences

Street address
Faculty of Nursing, Shahid Dr. Kharazmi Complex, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, opposite Mellat Park, Vakil-Abad Highway, Mashhad

City
Mashhad

Province
Razavi Khorasan

Postal code
۹۱۷۷۸۹۹۱۹۱

Approval date
2026-06-17, 1405/03/27

Ethics committee reference number
IR.MUMS.NURSE.REC.1405.031

Health conditions studied

1

Description of health condition studied
Understanding futile care

ICD-10 code

ICD-10 code description

2

Description of health condition studied
Moral distress

ICD-10 code

ICD-10 code description

Primary outcomes

1

Description
Score derived from Mohammadi's Futile Care Perception Questionnaire

Timepoint
Before the intervention, immediately, and two weeks after the end of the last MCD session

Method of measurement
Mohammadi's perception of futile care questionnaire

2

Description
The score derived from the Soleimani Moral Distress Questionnaire
Timepoint
Before the intervention, immediately, and two weeks after the end of the last MCD session
Method of measurement
Soleimani's moral distress questionnaire

Secondary outcomes

empty

Intervention groups

1

Description
MCD will be implemented in the intervention group. Prior to the intervention, to ensure consistency across groups regarding the ethical cases presented, the research team will compile a list of ethical scenarios—such as end-of-life care and patients in a vegetative state—tailored to the ICU setting and the study objectives; these scenarios will be reviewed and validated by experts. Subsequently, one ethical scenario will be selected for presentation during each MCD session. Based on prior research, the MCD intervention will be conducted over three sessions, spaced one week apart. The sessions will be held with groups of ten nurses.The sessions will be structured such that the first session is held in person, while the second and third sessions take place virtually (via the Skyroom platform). Based on prior research, the duration of each in-person session will be between one and one-and-a-half hours. The MCD team will consist of a coordinator and two facilitators with expertise in nursing ethics concepts. Drawing on previous studies, the MCD intervention will be implemented across ten stages during each session.
Category
Behavior

2

Description
Control group: For the control group, educational content regarding ethical considerations in intensive care will be provided. Prior to the intervention, this content will be developed based on an extensive review of relevant literature and consultation with specialists and experts; it will then be submitted to seven faculty members and specialists for review and feedback on its quality. Subsequently, the resulting suggestions will be evaluated and incorporated.
Category
Other

Recruitment centers

1

Recruitment center
Name of recruitment center
ICU units at Imam Reza Hospital in Mashhad
Full name of responsible person
Elham Raoufi
Street address
Edge of Imam Reza Square, Ibn Sina Street, Mashhad
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2

Recruitment center
Name of recruitment center
ICU Units at Ghaem Hospital, Mashhad
Full name of responsible person
Elham Raoufi
Street address
Ghaem Educational, Research, and Treatment Center, Ahmadabad Street, Dr. Shariati Square
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Sponsors / Funding sources

1

Sponsor
Name of organization / entity
Mashhad University of Medical Sciences
Full name of responsible person
Mohsen Tafaghodi
Street address
University Office of Research and Technology, Ghoreyshi Building, Next to Hoveyzeh Cinema, Daneshgah Street
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IRH.CRU@mums.ac.ir
Grant name

Grant code / Reference number

Is the source of funding the same sponsor organization/entity?
Yes

Title of funding source
Mashhad University of Medical Sciences

Proportion provided by this source
100

Public or private sector
Public

Domestic or foreign origin
Domestic

Category of foreign source of funding
empty

Country of origin

Type of organization providing the funding
Academic

Person responsible for general inquiries

Contact

Name of organization / entity
Mashhad University of Medical Sciences

Full name of responsible person
Elham Raoufi

Position
Master's student

Latest degree
Bachelor

Other areas of specialty/work
Nursery

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Person responsible for scientific inquiries

Contact

Name of organization / entity
Mashhad University of Medical Sciences

Full name of responsible person
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Position
Associate professor

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Other areas of specialty/work
Nursery

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Person responsible for updating data

Contact

Name of organization / entity
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Full name of responsible person
Elham Raoufi

Position
Master's student

Latest degree
Bachelor

Other areas of specialty/work
Nursery

Street address
Faculty of Nursing, Shahid Dr. Kharazmi Complex, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, opposite Mellat Park, Vakil-Abad Highway, Mashhad

City
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Email
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Sharing plan

Deidentified Individual Participant Data Set (IPD)
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Study Protocol
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Statistical Analysis Plan
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Informed Consent Form
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Clinical Study Report
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Analytic Code
Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available

Data Dictionary

Undecided - It is not yet known if there will be a plan to make this available