Introduction to Critical Care Nursing

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Introduction to Critical Care Nursing

- **Critical care:** is direct delivery of medical care for a critically ill or injured patient.
- **Critical care nursing**: is concerned with human responses to life-threatening problems, such as trauma, major surgery, or complications of illness.

The human response can be a physiological or psychological phenomenon. Critical care units range from open-heart recovery units, burn units, and neurologic intensive care units (ICUs) to surgical ICUs, medical ICUs, and cardiac care units.

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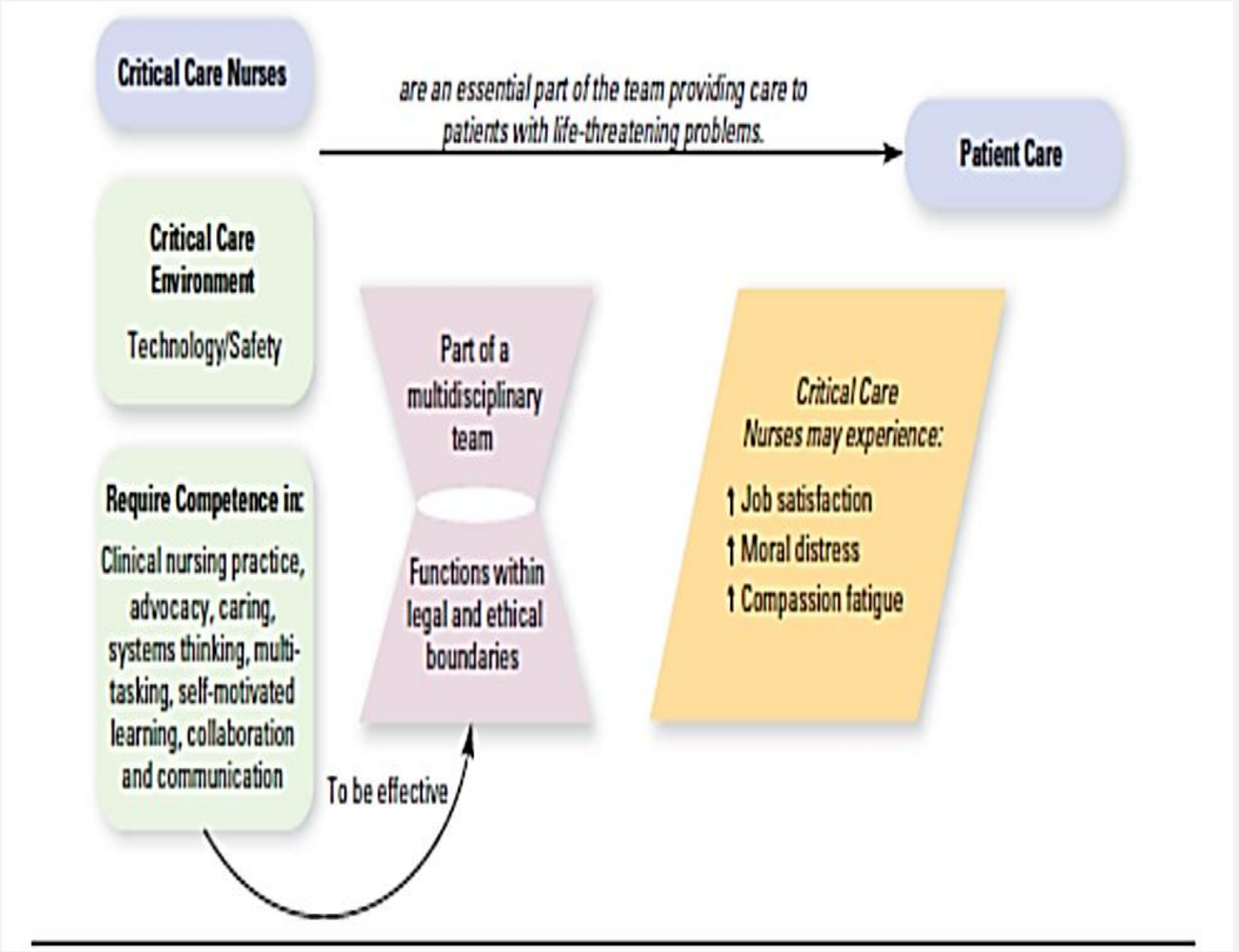
- **Intensive care unit (ICU):** is an area of a hospital that provides aggressive therapy, using state-of-the-art technology and both invasive and noninvasive monitoring for critically ill and high-risk patients.
- **Critically ill patients**: are defined as those patients who are at high risk for actual or potential life threatening health problems.

Critical Care Nursing Roles

1. Respect and support the right of the patient or patient's designated surrogate to autonomy and informed decision making.
2. Intervene when the best interest of the patient question.
3. Help the patient obtain necessary care.
4. Respect the values, beliefs, and rights of the patient.
5. Provide education and support help to the patient to make decisions.
6. Represent the patient in accordance with the patient's choices.
7. Support the decisions of the patient or patient's designated surrogate or transfer care to an equally qualified critical care nurse.
8. Intercede for patients who cannot speak for themselves in situations that require immediate attention.
9. Monitor and safeguard the quality of care that the patient receives.
10. Act as a liaison between the patient and the patient's family and other health care professionals.

Critical care nurse’s work in a wide variety of settings, filling many roles including:

- ✓ Bedside clinicians.
- ✓ Nurse educators.
- ✓ Nurse researchers.
- ✓ Nurse Managers.
- ✓ Clinical nurse specialists and nurse practitioners.
- ✓ Managed care has also fueled a growing demand for advanced practice nurses in the acute care setting.
- ✓ Advanced practice nurses are those who have received advanced education at the master's or doctoral level.


Critical Care Nurses
are an essential part of the team providing care to patients with life-threatening problems.
Patient Care
Critical Care Environment
Technology/Safety
Require Competence in:
Clinical nursing practice, advocacy, caring, systems thinking, multi-tasking, self-motivated learning, collaboration and communication
To be effective
Part of a multidisciplinary team
Functions within legal and ethical boundaries
Critical Care Nurses may experience:
↑ Job satisfaction
↑ Moral distress
↑ Compassion fatigue

Critical care services

The Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) endorsed guidelines for critical care services based on three levels of care:

Level I: Comprehensive care for a wide variety of disorders. Sophisticated equipment, specialized nurses, and physicians with specialized preparation (intensivists) are continuously available. Comprehensive support services from pharmacy, nutrition, respiratory, pastoral care, and social work are nearby.

Level II: Comprehensive critical care for most disorders but the unit may not be able to care for specific types of patients (e.g., cardiothoracic surgical patients).

Level III: Initial stabilization of critically ill patients provided but limited ability to provide comprehensive critical care.

Level of Education for Critical Care Nurses

- To become a registered nurse (RN), an individual must earn a diploma in nursing, an associate degree in nursing (ADN) or a bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN) and pass a national licensing exam.
- Requirements vary as dictated by each state's Board of Nursing. Many nursing schools offer students exposure to critical care, but most of a critical care nurse's specialty education and orientation is provided by the employer. Advanced practice nurses must earn a degree at the master's or doctoral level.

Characteristics of Critically Ill Patients:

The AACN continues by identifying and describing eight characteristics of critically ill patients.

1. **Resiliency:** "The ability to bounce back quickly after insult." Patients range along the continuum from being unable to mount a response to having strong reserves.
2. **Vulnerability:** "Susceptibility to actual or potential stressors." Patients range from being fragile to being safe or "out of the woods."
3. **Stability:** "The ability to maintain steady state equilibrium." Patients vary from being unresponsive to therapies and at high risk for death to stable and responsive to therapy.

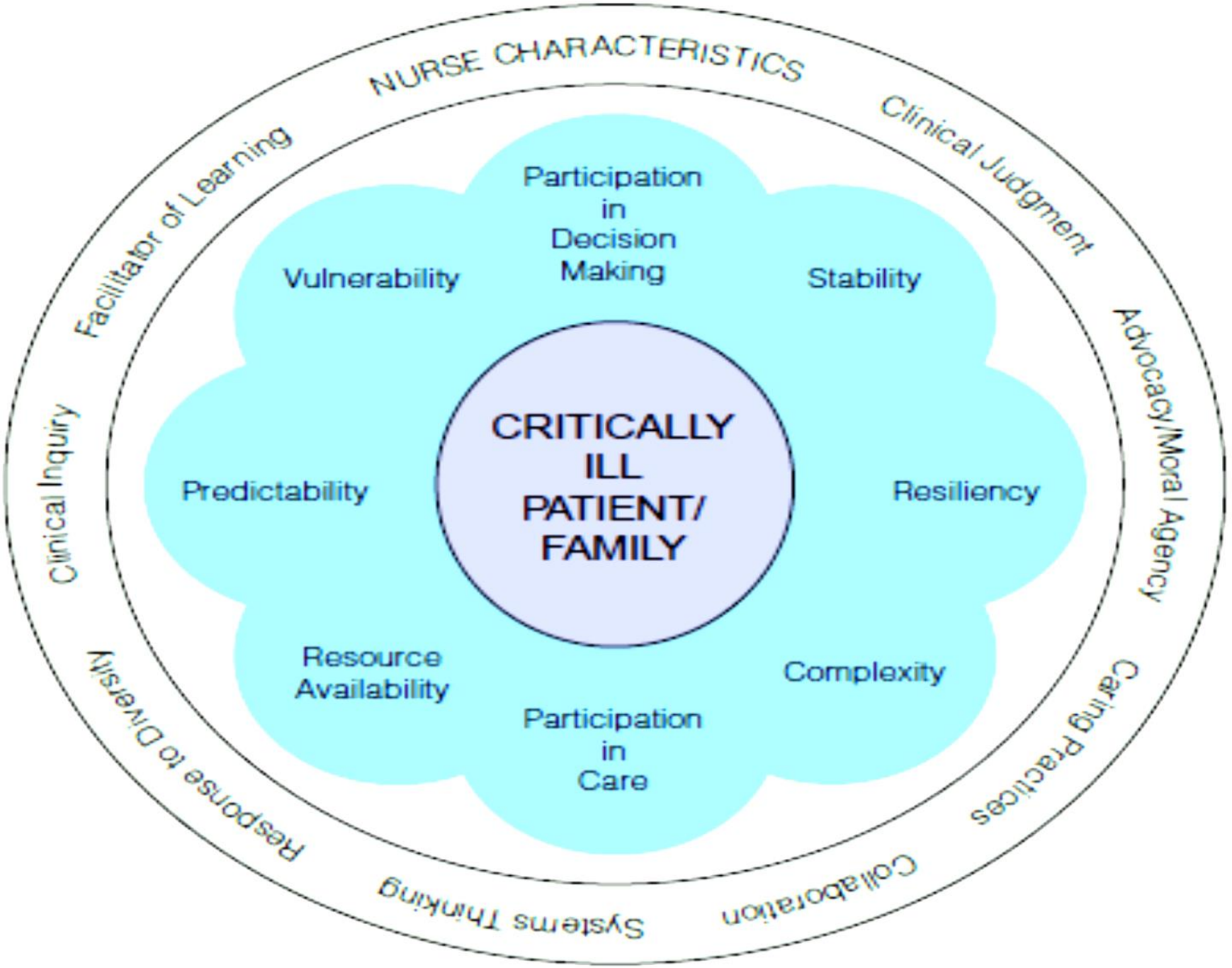
4•**Complexity:** “The intricate entanglement of two or more systems (e.g., body, family).” Patients span the gamut from having atypical presentations of an illness or complex family dynamics to simple clear-cut and typical presentation.

5•**Predictability:** “A characteristic that allows one to predict a certain course of events or course of illness.” Patients range from having an unusual or unexpected course of illness to following a critical pathway.

6•**Resource availability:** “Extent of resources the patient, family, and community bring to the situation.” Patients may have few of the resources necessary for recovery available to them or may have extensive knowledge and skills.

7•**Participation in care:** “Extent to which patient and/or family engage in care.” Patients and families may vary from being unable or unwilling to assist with care to being fully willing and able to participate.

8.Participation in decision-making: “Extent to which patient and/or family engage in decision-making.” Patients and families may range from requiring surrogate decision makers to having full capacity and making decisions for themselves.


NURSE CHARACTERISTICS
Clinical Judgment
Advocacy/Moral Agency
Caring Practices
Collaboration
Systems Thinking
Response to Diversity
Clinical Inquiry
Facilitator of Learning
Participation in Decision Making
Vulnerability
Stability
Predictability
Resiliency
Resource Availability
Complexity
Participation in Care
CRITICALLY ILL PATIENT/ FAMILY

Background and classification of critically ill patients:

Definition	Classification
Level 0	Patients whose needs can be met through routine ward care in an acute hospital
Level 1	Patients at risk of their condition deteriorating, or recently relocated from higher levels of care, whose needs can be met on an acute ward with additional advice and support from a critical care team
Level 2	Patients requiring more detailed observation or intervention, including support for a single failing organ system or postoperative care, and those ‘stepping down’ from higher levels of care
Level 3	Patients requiring advanced respiratory support alone or basic respiratory support together with support of at least two organ systems. This level includes all complex patients requiring support for multi-organ failure

Common Characteristics of Critical Care Units

1. A nurse-to-patient ratio of 1:1 or 1:2.
2. Critically ill patients.
3. Patients with multiple diagnoses.
4. Specialized equipment: Continuous EKG, blood pressure, and oxygen saturation monitors; multiple IV pumps, arterial lines, pulmonary artery catheter, endotracheal tubes, ventilators, chest tubes, urinary catheters, central venous lines, and nasogastric tubes and/or g-tubes.
5. Isolation precautions.
6. Restricted visiting hours.
7. Bedside computers for documentation.