

# Stress Manifestations in Patients and Families after Critical Illness

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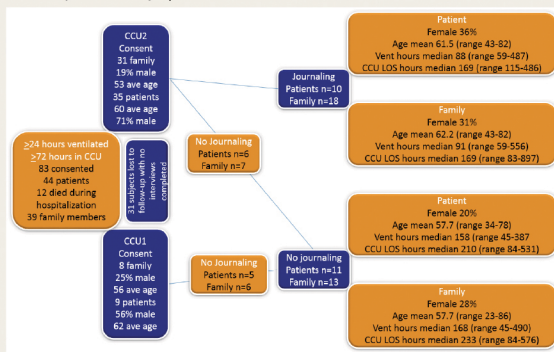
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## Purpose

- Tested whether critical care patients and their families who participated in journaling during the critical care stay, compared to those who do not journal, experienced lower stress manifestations following the critical illness

## Methods

- Two mixed medical surgical CCUs
- Enrolled patients & one family member
- Patients with mechanical ventilation for >24 hours and
- With a CCU stay of >72 hours
- CCU1 did not offer journaling and CCU2 did
- Researchers attempted to interview participants at 1, 2, and 4 months after CCU discharge or CCU death
- Patients and designated family members were asked about journaling and interviewed using the Post Traumatic Stress Scale (PTSS-14) questionnaire

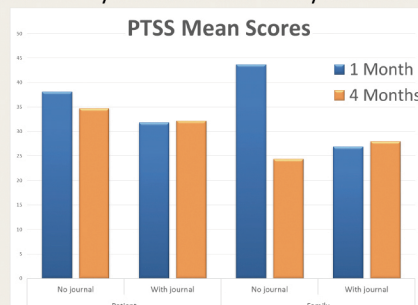


## Intervention

Patients and family were invited to participate in journaling and were provided a journal and pen to facilitate writing.

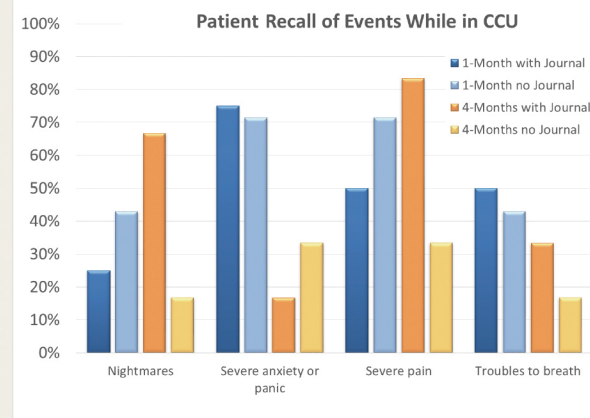
## Background

- Few studies have clearly evaluated the effectiveness of family-written journals in reducing stress and promoting recovery after critical illness
- Studies have utilized journals authored exclusively by CCU staff or by both staff and family members



## Results

- Patients (n=44) and a family member (n=39)
- Participants w/o follow-up (n=31) excluded analysis
- Pts 1-month interviews (n=4 w/ journal and 7 w/o journal) mean PTSS-14 scores 31.8 vs. 38.1 (p=.776)
- 12 patients had 4-month interviews (n=6 in each group) with mean scores 32.2 vs. 34.7 (p=.543)
- 18 family members had 1-month interviews (n=9 in each) with mean scores 26.9 vs 43.7 (p=.111)
- 19 family members had 4-month interviews (n=11 w/ journal and 8 w/o journal) with mean scores 28.0 vs 24.4 (p>.999)
- CCU memories of nightmares, severe anxiety/panic, physical pain and feeling breathless compared at 1 and 4 months had no statistically significant difference for patients with or without journals



## Conclusions

- Contact was lost with 31 of the 83 participants
- Due to the small sample sizes this study does not have statistical power to drive significant conclusions
- Results show CCU patients and family who participate in journaling while in the critical care unit did not report fewer stress manifestations compared to those who did not participate in journaling
- Recall of specific distresses was not statistically different between patients with or without journals nor between time intervals

## References

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