Protocol for a Randomised Clinical Trial Investigating the Clinical Effectiveness and Cost Benefit of a Lifestyle Intervention Targeting Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

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Sailing through Ethnographic Data Collection

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BACKGROUND

Background and particular aspects of data collection within ethnography are not commonly described in detail within health care environment research.

OBJECTIVES

• To describe particular methodological issues of data collection in a remote context.
• To propose strategies to overcome the methodological issues described.

METHOD & DESIGN

• Focused ethnography: primary researcher lived and worked on site as a participant observer for 6 months by complete immersion (24/7) in a remote setting.
• Data collection consisted of 4 phases (see Table 1), entailing observation and participation, collection of and reflection on field notes, 49 semi-structured interviews and one focus group, and document analysis.
• The primary researcher assumed ‘participant observer’ position, working full time as a Registered Nurse, collecting data after hours, straddling the insider/outsider role. This balance was due to having over a decade of previous service with the organisation, and returning a decade later to conduct the research.

SETTING

• A mobile hospital ship providing acute and complex surgical procedures
• 84 hospital in-patient beds
• 5 operating theatres
• Docked in a port city of a resource poor country for 10 months at a time
• A mobile hospital ship providing acute and complex surgical procedures

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS (Table 1)

PHASE 1
• Gaining access, developing trust
• Identifying key informants

PHASE 2
• Recruiting and gaining consent
• Conducting 49 interviews

PHASE 3
• Reflecting on observations
• Document analysis
• Check transcriptions

PHASE 4
• Resolve any ambiguities
• Withdrawing from site

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The process of social research, despite best intentions and planning, may not always travel the path that the researcher expects his/her rational enquiry to follow. Be aware of the challenges to data collection before commencing the process and be flexible and reflexive in managing issues while in the field.

Prior awareness of challenges can help prepare the researcher for the navigational path of data collection and ensure integrity by adhering to ethical principles.

REFERENCES


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