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**Exploring Safety and Quality in Renal Care
with Photographic Methods**

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Dialysis therapy is associated with many potential risks, but little research has addressed patient safety specifically in dialysis units. Although a number of publications describe strategies and programs used to enhance safety in this setting, data are not available to support the need for or success of the programs. Further, there have been no studies that focus specifically on environmental safety. In this study, we used participatory photographic research methods to explore perceptions of safety and quality with a patient care team in one in-center hemodialysis unit. The participatory methods included focus groups, practitioner-led photo narration, and photo elicitation. An initial focus group was conducted with 14 nurses to develop a list of potential safety and quality issues. Using this list as a guide, we conducted a photographic walkabout co-led by two nurses to obtain photographs of the patient care unit and nurses' stories (photo narration) about safety and quality in their care environment. Following content analysis, we used 14/40 photos to discuss preliminary themes in a photo elicitation focus group with four additional unit staff in order to identify safety practices, potential risks, and priority areas for improvement. Major themes related to: clutter, infection control, unit design, chemicals and air quality, lack of storage space, and health and safety hazards (including wet floors, tripping hazards from hoses, moving furniture/chairs). The data analysis was shared with the staff to design evidence-based improvements to be tested in future projects. The methods were useful for understanding the nature of safety in this care environment, and may be used on an ongoing basis to monitor and enhance safety. Future research is required to explore the various risks in greater depth and in other units and facilities.

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