The use of focused ethnography in nursing research

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Aim
To provide an overview of the relevance and strengths of focused ethnography in nursing research. The paper provides descriptions of focused ethnography and discusses using exemplars to show how focused ethnographies can enhance and understand nursing practice.

Background
Orthodox ethnographic approaches may not always be suitable or desirable for research in diverse nursing contexts. Focused ethnography has emerged as a promising method for applying ethnography to a distinct issue or shared experience in cultures or sub-cultures and in specific settings, rather than throughout entire communities. Unfortunately, there is limited guidance on using focused ethnography, particularly as applied to nursing research.

Data sources
Research studies performed by nurses using focused ethnography are summarised to show how they fulfilled three main purposes of the genre in nursing research. Additional citations are provided to help demonstrate the versatility of focused ethnography in exploring distinct problems in a specific context in different populations and groups of people.

Discussion
The unique role that nurses play in health care, coupled with their skills in enquiry, can contribute to the further development of the discipline. Focused ethnography offers an opportunity to gain a better understanding and appreciation of nursing as a profession, and the role it plays in society.

Conclusion
Focused ethnography has emerged as a relevant research methodology that can be used by nurse researchers to understand specific societal issues that affect different facets of nursing practice.

Implications for practice/research
As nurse researchers endeavour to understand experiences in light of their health and life situations, focused ethnography enables them to understand the interrelationship between people and their environments in the society in which they live.

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Conflict of interest
None declared

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Focused ethnography - qualitative research - methodology - reflexivity
Data Sources: Research studies performed by nurses using focused ethnography are summarised to show how they fulfilled three main purposes of the genre in nursing research. Additional citations are provided to help demonstrate the versatility of focused ethnography in exploring distinct problems in a specific context in different populations and groups of people.

Discussion: The unique role that nurses play in health care, coupled with their skills in enquiry, can contribute to the further development of the discipline. Focused ethnography offers an opportunity to gain a better understanding.