

**Participants' Views of Delayed Consent for a Randomised
Controlled Trial in Intensive Care**

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A thesis submitted in accordance with the total requirements for admission to
the degree of Master of Nursing (Honours)

**Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Health
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September 2011

Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several people for their help and guidance through my candidature. My principal supervisor Professor Sharon McKinley (Professor of Critical Care Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Health, University of Technology, Sydney and Northern Sydney Central Coast Health, Sydney) and Cosupervisor Dr Anthony Delaney (Staff Specialist Royal North Shore Hospital and University of Sydney) were always available for advice. I thank them for remaining patient, keeping me motivated and for ensuring that I strove to achieve the highest standards.

This project is a substudy of the Normoglycaemia in Intensive Care-Survival Using Glucose Algorithm Regulation (NICE-SUGAR) study and is endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society Clinical Trials Group. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the George Institute and the site investigators (Appendix G) to the main NICE-SUGAR study. I would like to especially thank two researchers in the NICE-SUGAR study, Alisa Higgins (Research Fellow) and Lynette Newby (Research Coordinator).

Thank you to Rachel Foley (Research nurse) for assistance with completion of questionnaires on the telephone and data entry, Mary Fien (Research Officer) for assistance with data collection and data entry, Phil Johnson (Scientific and Technical Officer) and Jane Bowey (ICU Office Manager) for assistance with data retrieval from the ICU database. Also Di Roche (chaplain) Margaret Bramwell (senior social worker) and Victoria Whitfield (social worker) for their help. Thank you to Dr Ray Raper (Department Head of the Intensive Care Unit, the Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH)), A/Professor Richard Lee (Senior Staff Specialist) and Professor Simon Finfer (Senior Staff Specialist) for their support.

Finally, I would also like to thank Rosalind Elliott (PhD candidate) for assistance with telephone calls, for proof reading chapters and her encouragement and inspiration throughout. I would also like to thank my daughter, Emily Potter, for tolerating far too many takeaway dinners over the candidature.

Funding: I was awarded a novice researcher grant from the Australian College of Critical Care Nurses (ACCCN) to support the study. I was also supported by a Royal North Shore Hospital Nursing and Midwifery scholarship, provided by the Skinner family, for 12 months.

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Abstract

Each year many people experience critical illness and require a stay in an intensive care unit. Critical illness has a high mortality, making evaluation of therapies a priority for research in this area. Research conducted in the critical care environment is difficult with respect to obtaining first person informed consent. Patients who are critically ill have diminished capacity for decision making and consequently they are rarely able to provide informed consent before enrolment in a clinical trial. In Australia, critically ill patients are enrolled into clinical trials using delayed consent. However, there is a paucity of research on the opinion of clinical trial participants about consent obtained following enrolment.

The aim of this study was to determine the opinion of participants enrolled in the NICE-SUGAR study, under the provision for delayed consent, of the delayed consent process. A secondary aim was to investigate their opinions of third party consent and their preferences for decision makers. Former ICU patients who were enrolled in the NICE-SUGAR study at the Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) with delayed consent, who were cognitively intact when screened, and were judged to have sufficient proficiency in the English language, were contacted and invited to participate in this study. Willing participants completed a questionnaire regarding their opinion of the delayed consent process. The questionnaire was developed for this study and contained fixed response and open ended questions.

There were 634 participants in the NICE-SUGAR study at the RNSH, 256 of these former ICU patients were contacted and responses were received from 210 (response rate 82%). Participants were 37.6% female with mean \pm SD age of 61 \pm 16 and APACHE II scores of 18 \pm 6.79. Delayed consent was obtained from participants (57/210; 27.1%) and the substitute decision maker (152/210; 72.4%). Most respondents (195/204; 95.6%) reported they would have consented to participate in NICE-SUGAR if asked before enrolment. Most respondents (163/198; 82.3%), ranked first (mean=1.49) “the person who consented on their behalf for the NICE Study” as most preferred to make decisions on their behalf. Most (177/202; 87.6%) agreed with the decision made by their relative/friend.

In conclusion, most former ICU patients who had been enrolled in the NICE-SUGAR study from the RNSH with delayed consent, would have provided consent to participate had they been capable. Furthermore, most respondents agreed with the decision made by the substitute decision maker.