Peripherally inserted central catheters (PICCs) are a type of central venous access device used to deliver a variety of intravenous therapies, including chemotherapy. PICCs may be placed by interventional radiologists, anaesthetists or, as is increasingly common, by specialist nurses in the hospital setting. However, little is known about how patients feel regarding the PICC insertion procedure. The aim of this study was to interview patients who had undergone a recent PICC insertion in the chemotherapy day unit to identify their experiences. On analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interview, five themes emerged: the context of cancer; expectations; levels of pain and anxiety; coping strategies; and explanation. The findings of this study support some previously described elements of procedural experiences; however, new understanding has provided implications for practice in the areas of expectations, allaying anxiety levels, supporting individual coping strategies and providing explanation. The major limitation of the study was the homogenous sample of oncology patients with a clear link between the patient experience of the PICC insertion and the context of cancer. The main recommendation for further research would be to repeat this study with a broader patient population.
Patients' experiences of the peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) insertion procedure