

Research and Creative Experience for Undergraduates Program (RCEU) Summer 2015

Nursing Students' Concerns and Experiences Toward End-of-Life Care: A Mixed Methods Study Using Simulation

Patricia Cosby, BSN Student, College of Nursing, Rita Ferguson, PhD, RN, CHPN, CNE

Overview

Nurses who lack experience in end-of-life care (EOLC) often have anxiety and fears related to caring for a patient who is near death or actively dying (Moreland, Lemieux & Myers, 2012). Even in the clinical setting, it is difficult to ensure that students will experience caring for a dying patient (Fabro, Schaffer & Scharton, 2014). Simulation can give students a safe, choreographed setting in which to practice skills associated with EOLC (Powell-Laney, Keen & Hall, 2012).

Sample & Setting

Nursing students (n=17) participated in a simulation in which a terminal cancer patient dies. Students cared for patient using current skill levels.

Gender: Male - 3 Female - 14	Age range	
Most recent clinical course completed	19-24	10
NUR 310 (Fundamentals) - 2	25-29	4
NUR 308 (Med-Surg 1) - 14	40-44	2
NUR 401 (Med-Surg 2) - 1	50 years or older	1



"Just because they are dying doesn't mean they get any less of our care"

Conceptual Framework

Nurses provide the majority of the care for patients needing EOLC. Research shows that the more exposure students have with patients needing this care, the less anxiety the student will have giving the care in a clinical setting (Moreland et al., 2012). Smith-Stoner's Silver Hour is a conceptual framework within which educators can ensure students are gaining skills related to EOLC at every level - from novice to expert (2009).

References

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Key Findings

Four major themes identified:

- Unknown territory
 - were not sure of next step
 - wanted someone with them
 - DNR status/restricts
- Reverence & dignity
 - knowing patient
 - compassion
 - advocacy
- Preparation
 - did the best we could
 - perspective of comfort as treatment
 - experiential knowledge
- Communication
 - therapeutic
 - patient focused
 - family focused



"I felt like I was going into unknown territory"



"Naturally, it is in us to want to do something for him"

"Be involved, be supportive for the family, as somebody is passing on to another life."

"I want to feel more confident and comfortable"

"As a nurse that is something very real that we need to be exposed to"

Impact/Conclusions

This study suggests that using this type of simulation would result in learning skills used in EOLC, and could also prepare students emotionally. The pre-survey indicated that most students would be comfortable caring for dying patients, and that providing the care would be rewarding. The knowledge gained during the simulation, and spoken of during the debriefing, showed that participants could see the benefit of having this type of simulation before caring for an actively dying patient. As the students debriefed and talked through the skills used (and not used) during the simulation, they understood what they could have done differently and how it would have changed the outcome. Nursing students verbalized increased comfort providing EOLC after participation in the simulation.