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Student nurses appreciate experiential learning for spiritual care in hospice and palliative care settings

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Spirituality is subjective, broad, multifaceted, and defies consensus in terms of definition. However, there is recognition that the spirituality influences a patient's physical and mental health, also their wellbeing and quality of life. Accordingly, spiritual care is considered a part of the nurse's role and is an integral part of holistic nursing care. However, the nursing profession favours the medical model of health that concentrates on the physical and psycho-social aspects of health care, and for the most part neglects the spiritual. Nevertheless, pre-registration nurse education has a responsibility to adequately prepare student nurses for all aspect of their role, but research shows that matters of spirituality are poorly represented in nurse education and training. While debates continue as to whether spirituality education is more 'caught than taught', nurses desire to be better equipped to deliver spiritual care. Therefore, some preliminary findings from a grounded theory investigation provides useful information to show that, student nurses will draw on various resources to enable them to fulfil the spiritual part of their role. In addition, clinical experience in hospice and palliative care environments, seem to provide most useful learning opportunities for students' understanding and facilitation of spiritual needs.

Biography

Lesline P Lewinson has a special interest in spirituality in healthcare. She is a qualified nurse, midwife, health visitor and nurse lecturer. Accordingly, she has acquired a wide-range of nursing experience in both acute and community settings. During the late 1990's through a Department of Health funded research project, she was influential in improving primary healthcare access for residents on the Broadwater Farm Estate in London, England. However, for a number of years she was involved in nurse education as a senior lecturer in adult nursing, at the University of Hertfordshire. Presently, she is completing PhD studies at Staffordshire University, looking into the spiritual dimension of holistic nursing care.

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