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Palliative care for dying patients: Perceptions of nursing students

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Background: Understanding nursing students' perceptions of dying and palliative care can help educators prepare students for these situations by using the research available to plan better ways to teach students about the needs of the dying patients.

Aim: The aim of this study was to identify the perceptions of nursing students about palliative care for dying patients while on clinical placements.

Methods: A qualitative research design was used to obtain data from nursing students who had cared for dying patients during their clinical placements. A total of 15 senior nursing students participated in this study. This study used semi-structured interview guides and unstructured face-to-face dialogue with the participants based on a qualitative method. The data were analyzed based on the phenomenological approach of qualitative methodology.

Results: Four categories were identified from the content analysis: Feeling of stress and inadequacy; inability to use effective communication skills; symptom management; providing emotional support to family. Most of students in the study reported that caring for a dying patient was a stressful experience, which experienced stress and anxiety related to death, and was not feel competent. Students reported emotional distress and feelings of inadequacy with regard to communicating with patients and supporting the family of the dying patient. Nursing students' perceptions of palliative care focused on symptom management.

Conclusion: These experiences highlight a need for strategies to support nursing students about competence, communication skills and coping with emotional stress. Student nurses need to be prepared to take an active role in caring for dying patients.

Biography

Semra Aciksozrn has completed her Master's degree in 2007 from Gulhane Military Medical Academy, Institute of Health Sciences Fundamentals of Nursing Program. She has completed her PhD from Gulhane Military Medical Academy, School of Nursing in 2012 and Postdoctoral studies from Gulhane Military Medical Academy, School of Nursing. She is working in Gulhane Military Medical Academy School of Nursing as a Lecturer. She has published 5 papers in national and international journals and she has authored and coauthored more than 45 abstracts.

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