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Ethical decision-making practice of nursing students in end-of-life care

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Background & Aim: Ethical problems in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) are common, especially when caring for patients at the end of life. Thus, medical professionals who work in ICUs must have the ability to analyze, evaluate and make decisions in ethical issues that are relevant to their duties, making use of ethical theories and principles. We aimed with this study to determine the ethical decision-making practice of nursing students about end-of-life care in ICU.

Methods: This descriptive study was carried out between January-June 2015 with nursing students who work with dying patients in ICU. The study sample consisted of a total of 87 student nurses. The data in the study were collected using the Data Collection Form, and Nursing Dilemma Test (NDT) to determine the ethical decision-making level of the students. The study data were analyzed with SPSS for Windows V.15.0. The independent sample t-test was used for the statistical comparison of the data. A p value of <0.05 was regarded as statistically significant.

Results: Most of students (94.3%) stated that they faced with the dying patients during clinical applications for the first time. Students stated that they often felt sadness (86.2%) while caring the dying patients. Most of the students (58.6%) think that the aim of end-of-life care is relieved pain of dying patients. The Nursing Principled Thinking level (48.57 ± 5.66) was above average, while Practical Considerations level (16.78 ± 3.03) was nearly at the level of average. These findings showed that students notice to decide taking into account the ethical principles if there is any ethical issues and students who decide ethical issues take into account environmental factors, relatively. It was found that nurses were familiar to the similar nursing dilemmas (16.79 ± 2.25). While deciding about ethical issues, the students who have experienced the death of a person from the family had significantly lower take into the account of environmental factors than the others ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: We found that nursing students respectively notice to decide taking into account the ethical principles and environmental factors while decide any ethical issues.

Biography

Gonul Kurt R N has completed her Master's degree in 2007 from Gulhane Military Medical Academy, Institute of Health Sciences Obstetrics and Gynecologic Nursing Program. She has completed her PhD from Gulhane Military Medical Academy, School of Nursing in 2012 and Post-doctoral 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 8 papers in national and international journals and she has authored and coauthored more than 48 abstracts.

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