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Stand By You: Enhancing Palliative Care Using Medical and Community Volunteers

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The Stand By You program is an endeavor undertaken by motivated medical students at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine and community volunteers in Miami, Florida in conjunction with the hospital staff and board members of the Baptist Health System to bring about coordinated, round the clock companionship for patients at the end-of-life (EOL). This initiative begun in 2011 was modeled after CCRN Sandra Clarke's No One Dies Alone program from 2001 with the same philosophy in mind that no one should die alone. Prior to each volunteer beginning to serve with SBY, they undergo a three-hour interactive training and orientation conducted by the Bioethics & Palliative Care Director and Pastoral Care AVP that offers education on spiritual diversity, boundary etiquette, and the importance of presence, as well as the physiological stages of dying. This helps complement the scientific and patient care training medical students traditionally receive. Through a series of surveys and questionnaires between March 2014 and November 2014 that were given to families of SBY patients and all support staff that interacted with the SBY volunteers following the provided the service, we have found that that this service has value to for these families. There were 100% of survey respondents agreeing that the SBY volunteers provided appropriate companionship service with the 88% strongly agreeing and 100% of survey respondents agreeing that they were pleased with the efficiency of SBY volunteer services with 82% strongly agreeing.

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