

Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress
Baccalaureate Nursing Students' Attitudes Toward Caring for Dying Patients and Their Families

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Purpose: While there have been significant developments to include end-of-life (EoL) care education within various nursing curricula, undergraduate nursing students indicate they lack the communication skills and competence to care for dying patients and their families. As our population ages, nurses are required to assess and manage an increasing number of patients with complex disease processes and co-morbidities. The purpose of this study is to identify Level I, Level II, and Level III Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students' attitudes toward caring for dying patients and their families. The assessment of nursing students' attitudes toward EoL care is important to the nursing profession as it may impact nursing education which in turn may result in better quality of care. It is necessary to document if differences exist among students from different levels to determine whether a need exists for implementation of EoL care education within the nursing curricula.

Methods: A comparative descriptive study utilized the Frommelt Attitudes Toward Care of the Dying Scale, Form B (FATCOD-B) to garner Level I, Level II, and Level III Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students' attitudes toward caring for dying patients and their families. A brief description of the study, the FATCOD-B survey and a demographic data sheet was disseminated via Qualtrics survey software to BSN students enrolled in the first semester of Level I, Level II and Level III nursing curriculum.

Results: Level I students' scores were higher indicating a more positive attitude. Students whose religious beliefs had a minor influence on their attitude toward death and dying had statistically higher FATCOD scores ($m=126$, $p=.021$) than those whose religious beliefs did not influence their attitude ($m=113$). n comparing Level I, Level II and Level III students who received previous EoL education, no significant difference was found. Although there were no significant statistical differences in attitudes towards caring for the dying among Level I, Level II, and Level III students, this finding supports the need to introduce end-of-life education beginning with first-year nursing students and progressing throughout the three years of nursing education.

Conclusion: The current need for undergraduate end-of-life education has been well documented and supported by the findings from this study. There is a universal need for nurses to be competent in providing compassionate, evidence-based end-of-life care, and nursing programs have the responsibility to educate undergraduates in this. The clinical implications for nursing education in the literature and this pilot help to provide support for consideration of integration of end-of-life care education into nursing curricula. The findings from this study, although not statistically significant by levels, provide support for implementation of EoL education across all levels. In addition, the lack of EoL education amongst all levels in this study reflects a knowledge gap and a need for EoL education. Embedding EoL education throughout the curriculum should improve attitudes towards caring for dying patients.

Title:

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Keywords:

Baccalaureate Nursing Students, Attitudes towards caring for patients at the end of life and End-of-Life Care Education

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Abstract Summary:

Learn the results of a research study comparing the attitudes of Level I, Level II and Level III baccalaureate nursing students towards caring for dying patients and their families.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

A. Undergraduate nursing students indicate they lack the communication skills and competence to care for dying patients and their families.

B. Many undergraduate nursing students may encounter dying patients and their families and are often expected to provide EoL care during their clinical experiences.

II. Body

A. Research Questions

- What are the attitudes towards caring for dying patients and their families among Level I, Level II, and Level III Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students?
- Are there differences among Level I, Level II, and Level III BSN students?

B. Methodology

- A comparative descriptive study utilized the Frommelt Attitudes Toward Care of the Dying Scale, Form B (FATCOD-B) to garner Level I, Level II, and Level III Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students' attitudes toward caring for dying patients and their families.

C. Instrument

- FATCOD-B, a 30-item, five-point Likert scale instrument. Potential scores range from 30-150. A higher score indicates a more positive attitude toward caring for the dying population (Frommelt, 2003).
- Approval from Nicholls State University HSIRB and informed consent was obtained.
- FATCOD-B survey and demographic data sheet was disseminated via Qualtrics survey software to Nicholls State University BSN students enrolled in the first semester of Level I, Level II and Level III nursing curriculum.

D. Findings

- Although there were no significant statistical differences in attitudes towards caring for the dying among Level I, Level II, and Level III students, Level I students' scores were higher indicating a more positive attitude.
- Students whose religious beliefs had a minor influence on their attitude toward death and dying had statistically higher FATCOD scores ($m=126$, $p=.021$) than those whose religious beliefs did not influence their attitude ($m=113$).
- In comparing Level I, Level II and Level III students who received previous EoL education, no significant difference was found.

E. Limitations

- Small sample size ($n=60$). A meaningful effect size estimate for planning subsequent studies would be beneficial. Only one BSN program included.

F. Implications

- Practice - EoL care education embedded into BSN curriculum could influence graduates' care for dying patients and their families.
- Education -Consider addition of specific EoL care course or incorporate EoL education throughout the curriculum. Enhance the curriculum with ELNEC modules and simulation.
- Future Research - Increase sample size; include additional BSN programs. Test efficacy of an EoL care course by using a pre-test, post-test design.

III. Conclusion

- There was no statistical significance in FATCOD-B scores by Level (I,II,III) and by previous education
- Level I scores indicated a more positive attitude towards caring for dying patients and their families.
- There is a need to implement EoL education throughout the nursing curriculum.

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