Title:
New Nurses’ Experiences Caring for Patients and Their Families at the End-of-Life

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Abstract Describes: Completed Work/Project

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Abstract Summary:
A qualitative, descriptive study assessed Novice and Advanced Beginner nurses’ experiences caring for patients and their families at the End of Life and assessed if and how their nursing program prepared them. Themes: Caring for the patient, Caring for the family, Caring for the nurse, and Being prepared.

References:
Abstract Text:

**Purpose:** Nurses are the primary healthcare professionals that spend the most time caring for seriously ill patients. Nurses have a responsibility to care for patients at the end of their lives, to relieve pain, and promote dignity so that patients can experience a peaceful death. As our elderly population grows and chronic health problems increase, there is a need to teach nurses and nursing students End-of-Life Care (EOLC). New nurses must be adequately prepared to provide sensitive, quality care to dying patients and their families. Nursing students do not have opportunities during clinical training to care for patients that are dying, and undergraduate education does not cover key components of EOLC. These components may include how to talk to the dying patient and the family, pain control, and postmortem care. Therefore, further research is necessary to determine how to appropriately bridge this gap.

**Methods:** A qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study assessed Novice and Advanced Beginner nurses’ experiences caring for patients and their families at the End of Life (EOL) and assessed if and how their nursing program prepared them to speak with and care for dying patients and their families. The study provides a phenomenological approach using one-on-one interviews with each subject to identify common themes.

**Results:** The subjects in this study represented a convenient sample of seventeen graduate Registered Nurses who have been practicing nursing for one year or less. Based on the results of the study, the following four themes of EOLC evolved from the interviews: 1) caring for the patient, 2) caring for the family, 3) caring for the nurse, and 4) being prepared. New nurses may encounter dying patients and their families working in any area of nursing. It is essential that they be adequately prepared to care for dying patients.

**Conclusion:** Despite a lack of experience or formal instruction in ELOC during nursing school, the majority of new nurses from this study still aimed to care for dying patients and their families with compassion and dignity. Dying patients deserve to receive the best quality care at the end of life and deserve to die with dignity surrounded by family and friends. EOLC education in nursing school curriculum can help nurses achieve this healthcare goal.