Background

- Nurses do not feel competent discussing advanced directives and do not perceive them to be important.
- An undergraduate curriculum survey in North Carolina indicated a lack of end-of-life (EOL) care content and 86.7% of programs included no advanced care planning.
- The attitudes of students 18-22 years of age were significantly impacted by targeted EOL education.
- Having students complete their own advanced directives increased confidence and competence in recommending advanced directives.

Research Design/Methods

Descriptive Phenomenological Qualitative Study Nursing Student Assignment: "Chronic Care" course Students:

- Received lecture on EOL care & advanced care planning;
- Reviewed the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s (IHI) video on the "Conversation Project" and downloaded the conversation toolkit;
- Engaged a person of their choice in a conversation using the "toolkit" as a guide;
- Completed a 600-800 word reflection paper related to their experience.
- Giorgi’s (2009) modified five-step method based on Husserl's philosophy was used to identify themes within the data.

Results

Themes

What Matters Most
Most people don’t want to talk about their death, but it is vital to know what each person values most ….. #7 EA

Having this conversation made me become more aware of how unique each person is and how everyone will have different end of life wishes. #32 Hispanic

The “Conversation Starter Kit” Supported The Nursing Student

The "Conversation Starter Kit” made everything much easier to talk about. I feel for most people the hardest part is knowing what to ask….it takes away the stress of asking an awkward or dumb question… #42 EA

Being True To Self And Importance Of Quality Over Quantity
Even in class being told that some people choose quality over quantity it’s different to hear someone actually choose it. #12 AA

I thought about how my mother’s end of life decisions would be respected and how knowing her wishes would inevitably reduce stress on family members. #25 AC

Personal And Professional Growth Through Experiential Learning

My perception of end of life changed significantly…more comfortable…doesn’t have to be dismal and gloomy….this is a lesson that I will take with me when I am a practicing nurse… #43 Asian

Preparing For Professional Readiness

I wanted to pretend in a way she was a patient. I would like to treat every patient with compassion as if they were my own mother, but also with the comportment of a professional. #27 EA

Cultural Insight

- Some people aren’t as afraid of death because of their religion, and others are afraid of death because of it. #26 AA
- I found that his culture fostered a more independent role in end of life care whereas my culture reflects a collective role involving my family. We realized that these differences could result in different wishes…. #23 Asian
- …some trouble with our cultural background because we are both Brazilian and we discussed how our Brazilian culture and the American culture can sometimes lead us to have different wishes. #32 Hispanic
- It is a “taboo” subject, much like sex is. #14 Hispanic

Implications

Education

- Experiential learning is transformative, can enhance professional competence, and support greater engagement of nurses in EOL conversations.

Research

- Studies on this topic are limited. Future studies are critical in identifying barriers to educating competent nurses to address EOL conversations.

Practice

- Nurses educate and advocate for persons and families regarding advanced directives. Engaging nursing students in EOL discussions and advanced care planning may enhance professional growth and competence.

Conclusion

- EOL conversations and advanced care planning are important processes that support personhood and may diminish the need for unwanted costly care.
- Nurses are often in a position to educate and advocate for persons and their families regarding advanced directives and play an integral role in EOL decision making.