

A Qualitative Study to Evaluate an End-of-Life Nursing Course

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Background

- ✓ Nurses are crucial through the dying process
- ✓ Obstacles that hinder a dying patient's wishes:
 - Nurses' perceptions of their role
 - Knowing how, when to intervene
- ✓ Education about end-of-life care has not kept pace with nursing knowledge and practice

Professional Apprenticeships

- ✓ Cognitive
 - Knowledge of natural sciences, theory, and principles required for practice
- ✓ Practical
 - Clinical reasoning, practice know-how, and using situational context
- ✓ Ethical Comportment
 - Learning to embody and enact the notions of good internal to the practice

(Benner, P., Sutphen, M., Leonard-Kahn, V., & Day, L. (2010). *Educating nurses: A call for radical transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Study Purpose

To explore nursing students' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes about an End-of-Life course that integrates three professional apprenticeships:

- Cognitive
- Practical
- Ethical comportment

Methodology

- ✓ IRB approval
- ✓ Purposeful sampling
 - Students enrolled in End-of-Life Care course
 - Participant incentive: pizza and drink
- ✓ Three focus groups
 - Conducted after class
 - Consent cover letter
 - Permission to audiotape
 - Guided by pre-set questions

Findings



Demographics

- ✓ 19 Participants
- ✓ Gender: 17 females, 2 males
- ✓ Age Range: 21 to 49 (mean age 24)
- ✓ Ethnicity:
 - 15 Caucasian, 3 African American, and 1 Asian
- ✓ Experience in caring for a dying person:
 - 14 = no, 5 = yes

Thematic Analysis

- ✓ Audio recordings transcribed verbatim
- ✓ Three researchers:
 - Became familiar with data
 - Generated initial codes
 - Reviewed for themes
 - Defined and named themes
- ✓ Three themes identified:
 - Learning from stories
 - Learning from “being there”
 - Learning from caring

Learning from Stories

- ✓ Addressed the cognitive apprenticeship
- ✓ Teaching strategy: Knowledge from stories
 - Patients
 - Professionals
 - Student nurses
 - Teachers

Learning from Stories (cont)

- ✓ “That was the best part, people talking, because I would actually pay attention versus a PowerPoint, I dose off. The people that came and talked, and shared stories about their experiences, it’s a little more engaging and you actually pay attention.”
- ✓ “I love talking to older people. I always love their stories, and their lives. And, you’re right. They were people before, and it’s important to let them know that they still matter. And, that’s what I think that did.”

Learning from “Being There”

- ✓ Addressed the practical apprenticeship
- ✓ Teaching strategy: Service learning experience
 - Collaborated with local hospice
 - Became hospice volunteers (10 hours)
 - Final gift

Learning from “Being There” (cont)

- ✓ “...the service learning hours...the volunteer. Because it was one-on-one, hands on, very personal, rather than sitting in a classroom and learning about it.”
- ✓ “...I learned how to just listen, or I learned how to communicate in a lot of different ways than talking...”
- ✓ “at clinical you want to do, do, do. So this experience was a lot more about just being, and being with the patients and trying to get to know them and their needs.”

Learning from Caring

- ✓ Addressed the ethical comportment apprenticeship
- ✓ Teaching strategies
 - Reflective journals
 - Enduring ideas
 - Personal funeral plans

Learning from Caring (cont)

- ✓ “I definitely think it has made an impact on my spirituality... to figure out where you stand, know your values, know what you believe. But it’s definitely made me take a much deeper look into my faith and my spirituality.”
- ✓ And, I guess with dying patients now, I’d be more attentive...You might as well give them the best death that they could have, and that requires taking that time to actually interact with them even if they can’t talk.”

Conclusions / Recommendations

- ✓ End-of-life course serves as a model for integrating the three professional apprenticeships
- ✓ Integrating the three apprenticeships into a course requires diverse teaching strategies
- ✓ Summative evaluations using qualitative methods for assessing learning outcomes provides rich feedback for improving nursing education

Questions / Contact Information

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