

Assessing Undergraduate Nursing Student's Attitudes Towards the Dying in an End-of-Life Simulation Using an ACE-S Unfolding Case Study

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Background

- Death is an inevitable part of life and nurses are often called upon to perform end-of-life (EOL) care.
- Leading bodies of nursing are in agreement that nursing education should prepare nursing students to manage and perform EOL care.
- The End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) was formed in 2000 to address deficits in nursing education concerning EOL.

Background (cont'd)

- NLN's Advancing Care Excellence for Seniors (ACE.S)
- Research suggests that undergraduate nursing students feel unprepared, fearful, and anxious when caring for the dying patient and their families.

Purpose of the Study

- The specific aims of the research study were to identify undergraduate sophomore nursing students' attitudes towards care of the dying client before and after an interactive EOL lecture and simulation and to describe students' perceptions of the educational activity.

Research Questions

1. What was the self-reported attitude toward the care of the dying client and family in sophomore undergraduate nursing students before and after a specifically designed EOL lecture and simulation?
2. What were the students' perceptions of the EOL educational activity?

Sample and Setting

- The study was conducted as part of a Foundations of Professional Nursing course taught in the second semester of sophomore year.
- Of the 58 students enrolled in this cohort, 54 students agreed to participate in the study.
- The university's institutional review board considered this study exempt.

Research Design

- A quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest design
- Convenience sample
- Instruments
 - Frommelt's Attitudes Towards Care of the Dying (FATCOD) version A
 - Demographic questionnaire
 - Open-ended questionnaire

EOL Lecture

- Students participated in an interactive lecture, which incorporated content from the ELNEC modules that addressed hospice and palliative care, caring for the dying patient, grief loss, bereavement, and communication.
- Teaching strategies included:
 - Completing a personal loss history
 - Case study
 - Video clips and personal stories
 - In addition, students also participated in a variety of ELNEC activities during the lecture to facilitate more active engagement with the concepts.

EOL Simulation

- NLN ACE-S Unfolding Case Study
- Two of the three scenarios were adapted for this simulation after considering the simulation objectives
 - Scenario one – patient and her partner have decided to stop treatment and agree to hospice care
 - Scenario two – patient dies and needs to communicate this and next steps to the partner
- Pre-work
 - Reviewing the document 5 Wishes
 - Answering questions on end-of-life care
- Debriefing
 - SPs and simulation facilitator conducted the debriefing
 - Students encouraged to express their feelings

Instruments

- FATCOD, a 30-item scale in which participants rate their attitude on a 5-point Likert scale.
 - The higher the scores the more positive the student's attitude towards care of the dying.
- Demographic questionnaire
- Qualitative questions
 - Describe how the educational experience prepared you for caring for a dying client and their family.
 - What part of the experience had the greatest impact on you?
 - What else do you feel you need to help you become more confident in caring for a dying client and their family?

Demographic results

- Participants (N = 54) were between the ages of 18-27 years.
- The majority were:
 - Female (42%)
 - Catholic (64.7%)
 - Caucasian (74.5%).

Quantitative Results

- The pretest mean was 118.23 (SD \pm 9.9; range 30 – 150)
- The posttest mean was 123.92 (SD \pm 10.7; range 30-150)
- A paired t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest $t(50) = 3.1.$, $p = 0.003$
- There were no statistically significant differences in gender, age, religion, and race/ethnicity pre and post educational experience.

Qualitative Results

- *Knowing what to say and how to offer presence*
- *Becoming emotionally prepared*
- *Learning Skills to Comfort*

Discussion

- The use of both a specifically designed lecture developed using the ELNEC competencies and simulation using the NLN ACE's case study on EOL care adds depth and value to the students' learning experience.
- The strengths of this multimodal educational experience were that it provided the students with an opportunity to practice communication skills, caring attitude, and apply knowledge learned in the interactive lecture to a dying client and their partner in a simulation setting.
- Since the students completed the survey four months following the multimodal educational experience, we can observe the impact this experience had on the students' learning well after the educational experience.

Conclusion

- The literature suggests that nurses feel unprepared and tend to avoid EOL care and discussions.
- This multimodal approach allowed the nursing students to gain the knowledge, skills, and caring attitudes needed to feel prepared to deliver quality EOL care.

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