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Hospice Reflection Journal/Paper

Comfort. When I think about hospice care, comfort is the first word that comes into my imagination. The reason for this? My great grandmother passed away at FRMC hospice and she was comforted and taken care of until she left us peacefully. When I was sitting in class, a simple baby nursing student, I was so anxious when we learned we would attend hospice as a clinical and assist with patient care. Personally, I have never seen anyone pass away and the thought of seeing someone pass was terrifying. Death is also a fear of mine. Besides my own fears, I expected hospice to smell like elders and baby powder, look comfortable with chairs and couches for family and friends, and house nurses who must be so kind and compassionate to care for people ready to pass to their next lives. So, this begs the question, were my expectations met? Most definitely! Upon arrival to the unit, the night shift nurse was so kind and showed us around and answered so many questions. I remember I asked how they care for patients and family who pass during the night, how they move the deceased, and she had answers for it all. However, I did expect to see more patients than one when we arrived. It sounds morbid but I expected everyone staying at hospice to be simply sleeping and on their death bed, and that was simply not the case. As we progressed, we provided patient care from changing her brief, feeding her breakfast and lunch, and changing her linens. We also checked expiration dates with the nurses and observed an admission assessment and documentation. I had the opportunity to listen to lung sounds and administer lorazepam as a slurry.

Painting a picture, imagine entering a spa, cucumbers on your eyes, and wrapped in a robe. In hospice, those patients can have a similar experience to a spa day. To be frank, not a lot of people staying at the hospice unit move around much, in fact, my nurse informed me most are bedbound and only a few in a blue moon get up and use the bedside commodes, urinals, and showers in the patient rooms. As they decline, they eventually become so exhausted, they also become bed bound. My story begins with me entering the hospice unit, expecting to encounter elderly resting comfortably in their beds and providing care for them such as bed baths, medication administration, repositioning, linen changes, brief management, restroom help, and other interventions I am used to. What I saw was a shock to me. Our night shift nurse gave us a tour of the unit, showing us the equipment in patient rooms such as oxygen, equipment locked in cabinets, patient call lights, cabinets, and so much more. We saw old rooms turned into offices, and nurse refrigerators and equipment. We went down the final hallway before finishing the square shape that hospice looks like and we entered a patient room containing a shower. I was shocked to see it was located just behind a curtain. Turning a corner, we entered the room containing the blanket warmer and I saw a huge tub. It was a patient spa tub to allow them extra comfort in the form of a spa day. This truly stuck with me because I never would have thought

how simple a bath can change your comfort and day. I know for me, when I feel tired or uncomfortable, a bath can help me feel so relaxed and soothe my aches and pains. I am a lifter and I have so many aches after long workouts and even a warm shower helps with that pain. Patients go through similar aches when they are passing, and a bath could help them just like it does for me.

My experience was great. I enjoyed caring for the patient we had and heling the nurses when I could. One experience with her that stood out was feeding her breakfast and lunch. I have never fed a patient so getting that experience was something special for me. Knowing her nutrition was being provided and she was eating and enjoyed it made me feel so good. She never opened her eyes and slept most of the time so moving the spoon close to her mouth and seeing her open her mouth with each bite and watching her finish her plate was amazing. I am grateful for hospice, and I believe it is a safe place for patients to pass comfortably and that belief held for me. They took great care of my grandma and helped her pass comfortably and I am so grateful for them. My initial thought has changed for sure. There were only two patients when I left, and I assumed there would have been way more. My belief that comforts was their highest priority. My expectations were met, and I enjoyed the experience.

Some questions I can ask myself about my experience would be, did it bother me? No, hospice is a place designed to allow people to pass away safely with medications and comfort care which is a great idea. I think allowing people a place to be with their loved ones while they pass away and say goodbye is great. Another question I could ask myself is if my experience changed my way of thinking. My feelings have not changed. I am still afraid of death and am afraid to see others pass but I think hospice is a place to allow comfort. Would my experience change my future actions? No. I would still provide the care a nurse would and make patients feel safe.

To conclude, I really did enjoy my experience. I wish there had been more patients to care for so I could have provided more patient care and possibly see and help with postmortem care. I think the nurses at hospice were great and educated me on their work and how they care for their patients. It was different than meditech which I am used to. Their medication administration was a little different. I have never pushed a medication into a patient mouth which was different for me. I would recommend hospice to future students to see a different side of the nursing world and how patients change from med surg floors to near death. Overall, I have to say with only one patient, it was a little slow and I probably did not get as much experience as other students with more patients but I still enjoyed providing the care I did.