

Veronica Cromwell

Psychiatric Nursing

July 6, 2023

Hospice Reflection Paper

Prior to attending the Stein Hospice clinical, I expected the dying process of the patients to be more grim. I anticipated the patients being in terrible physical conditions while they were just giving medications to not feel the pain that their bodies were clearly showing. I did not think the dying process of someone could be made to be peaceful without making the patient completely cognitively gone due to medications. I was pleasantly surprised by the staff and overall, the comfort levels of the patients walking into the patient rooms. The staff still conversed with the patients and explained the processes before touching them even though the patient did not respond verbally back. The nurses explained that although they may not seem like they are responding, you can see the recognition on their face, and they can still hear you. I assumed they would wait until they were turning the patients to see if they were in pain, but nurses would assess their patient's FLACC score first. They would then medicate and wait for fifteen minutes to make the moving process easier for the patient.

One patient stood out in particular during my clinical rotation. The patient had terminal stomach cancer with a tumor that was blocking his esophageal sphincter. The phlegm that was built up from his esophagus to his mouth could be heard prior to making it to his doorway. The nurse attempted suctioning multiple times, but the patient was not receptive and ultimately settled for oral care with toothettes. Eventually, the phlegm became so built up it began coming out of his nose and mouth. The nurse began positioning the patient to aide with the drainage and the patient began to look more comfortable and slept for the rest of the afternoon. The nurse informed me that he was a prominent member in Clyde schools and they held a vigil for him the night before. More than one hundred people showed up in t-shirts with his face on them, flashlights, and a boombox playing a song that the band used to play after he announced them onto the football field. The staff opened his bedroom window so that he would be able to hear the people outside. I was surprised and impressed with how involved the staff were with not only the patients, but the family and friends as well.

This experience expanded my knowledge of Stein Hospice and what it can provide for patients and families. I was aware of their services prior to starting nursing school, but failed to realize how effective and involved it was until clinical. The amount of patient's family members that the staff educated in one clinical rotation was astounding. They educated families on how to toilet their family members, the natural dying process and why their loved one was responding in a certain way, and why medications had been discontinued that they had been on for most of their life.

Did this clinical make me feel sad about end-of-life? It was eye opening why nurses advocate for Stein when their patient is terminal. I knew prior to coming to clinical that the patients in end-of-life care can receive more medications to allow them to be comfortable. I was exposed to how necessary that was and both patients I helped care for during the day needed increased doses of medications. Without the care of the nurses and Stein today, I would hate to think of what pain the patients would have been in. Would this experience change future actions? Prior to this experience I would have educated families on Stein based on what I learned in class. However, after seeing it and how comfortable the patients

were throughout the day, I can advocate for the services that Stein provides. It is more important to me after seeing it in person than it was when I had only been exposed to it through class.

Overall, my expectations prior to clinical were not even remarkably close to the work that the nurses do. Every patient was rounded on multiple times to ensure comfort and I learned how to put skills I learned in class to use with a patient. My feelings for Stein were never negative, but after the clinical they exponentially grew in a more positive way. Services such as Stein Hospice are extremely important and necessary for providing comfortable end-of-life care.