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Psychiatric Nursing

5 June 2025

Hospice Reflection Journal/Paper

Hospice care is specialized for individuals with a terminal illness who are expected to live six months or less. It is primarily focused on a holistic approach, providing comfort and symptom management during the patient's final stages of life. As a student nurse observing at hospice, I gained a deeper understanding into the compassionate and complete support that the medical professionals provide, including physical, emotional, and spiritual care. This experience offered an opportunity to see end-of-life care firsthand, allowing my emotional wellbeing to be challenged in ways that is not commonly encountered in a typical clinical experience. My grandmother passed away in this hospice facility, so it was a both nerve racking and an emotional morning, bringing up past feelings from such a tough period in my family's life. Due to that situation years ago, I had an expectation that I would most likely struggle mentally throughout the day, but I also was open to new challenges and learning opportunities that would come with the clinical experience. These expectations were successfully met; I gained knowledge of signs and symptoms to monitor during the dying process, Kennedy sores, subcutaneous button insertion, and suggestions for patient comfort. The nurse's dedication and passion for caring for patients during such a vulnerable time is truly inspiring, and their strength to continue providing compassionate care with a smile, even after losing a patient is honorable.

About halfway through my clinical day, one of the patients that I had been caring for had passed away. While I knew that this was something I might witness during my hospice experience, I was still stunned by the reality that someone's loved one was no longer living in this world. I found myself imagining what it would be like to be in their family's place, empathizing deeply. I thought to myself, "This is someone's husband, father, friend." That moment stood out to me because it put everything into perspective and made me realize how small my own problems are in comparison – and how truly blessed I am. By realizing the emotional weight of end-of-life care and the loss of a loved one, I came to understand the significant role nurses have in supporting families and being present through the grieving process. The nurse that I observed and worked alongside demonstrated resilience while treating both the patient and family with respect and dignity. This experience did not change my beliefs but instead deepened my respect for hospice nurses and the work that they do every day.

I was eager to complete this clinical experience because I have been dedicated to seeking out new experiences while searching for the nursing fields that I want to specialize in the future, now being only one year out from graduation. While I deeply respect the work done in hospice care and the emotional support that it provides to patients and their families, I have realized that I am drawn to a faster-paced environment where I stay more physically engaged throughout the shift. I do not think that working in this setting would necessarily bother me, however, I also believe that it would not be my first choice when choosing my career. Hospice is generally considered more of a slower pace of nursing due to allowing time for connection and emotional support, while improving the quality of life of patients. I believe that my strengths and dynamic gravitate more towards an environment that requires more rapid critical thinking skills and activity.

Despite my personal feelings from past experiences with my grandmother at hospice, my overall experience was truly eye-opening. During the eight hours that I was observing the nurses, I sensed the feeling as if the staff was emotionally detached to the patients, especially after one of the patients passed away. After pondering on this thought, I realized that this might be the nurse's way of coping with the death and dying process, as they constantly are in an environment where death is expected. The nurses mentioned having to acquire a "morbid sense of humor" to manage the emotional weight of the patient's death, so they can avoid being unable to continue providing care for the remainder of the patients on the unit. This made me recognize the importance of emotional resilience throughout the field of nursing and also made me feel extremely grateful for the life I have, as health should not be taken for granted.