

Going into this clinical experience I had a few expectations. I hoped to gain more knowledge about what hospice truly is, like how it helps patients and families deal with end-of-life situations. I wanted to know more about how patients are cared for towards the end-of-life. My thoughts about hospice were that nurses were there for comfort measures and that every patient who came to hospice would pass there within a few days. I wanted to learn more about how to communicate with a patient who is close to passing and also how to help family members cope with seeing their loved one pass. I also expected this clinical experience to teach me more about empathy since patients are very vulnerable while they receive care at hospice.

All of my expectations were met during this experience. I now know that hospice is more than comfort before you pass. It is providing comfort before the next stage, whether that is returning home, a nursing home, gaining your independence back, or eventually passing. I learned more on how to use silence, touch, and therapeutic techniques to calm both patients and family members. This experience definitely taught me much more about empathy than I expected. Everytime a staff member went to talk to a patient, a family member, or discuss the situation with another member of the healthcare team, I could truly tell that everyone felt deep empathy and compassion for the people that they cared for.

This experience gave me a much deeper appreciation for the unique compassion that defines hospice care. Unlike other clinical settings I've been exposed to, the empathy and emotional presence demonstrated by every hospice worker stood out in a profound way. It was clear that each staff member was not just doing a job but that they were fully committed to creating a space of dignity, peace, and emotional support for both patients and their families.

I saw firsthand how hospice nursing goes far beyond managing vital signs or administering medications. It involves being a calm presence during moments of fear and grief, offering comfort through silence, touch, and understanding. There is a level of empathy that I feel is not seen in other occupations. This experience helped me realize that at the heart of nursing is not only clinical skill, but also the ability to truly care for people during the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

Something that stood out to me during this experience, again goes back to the level of empathy that was shown. There were two patients that really stood out to me during this clinical. One was a man, somewhere around 83 years old, who is likely to pass in the next few days. Even though he was extremely agitated during the better part of my time there, everyone treated him with kindness and dignity. They made sure he was still respected, tried to talk to him about what he was going through, and eventually got him to relax by using therapeutic touch and words. The other patient that stood out to me was a younger woman who had more wrong with her body systems than right. She was in an incredible amount of pain but still remained the sweetest and nicest person. She would ask how the staff was doing, whenever she needed something she would apologize for taking the staff away for "patients who have it worse." She showed me that even towards the end-of-life you can remain compassionate to those around you.

I knew going into this experience that I did not want to become a hospice nurse. I knew the emotional impact would be too difficult for me. I've only experienced one death in my family and it was my great grandpa Red. I was very close to him so his passing affected me greatly. I knew when he passed that I would not be emotionally stable enough to work with patients who are of geriatric age and/or nearing the end of life. I noticed this during my clinical at hospice. When one of the family members started to get emotional and teary eyed I felt that I could feel

the exact pain she was feeling in that moment. It feels like a deep pain in your chest, and I feel that it would be difficult for me to move on from that feeling. I do believe that if I worked in hospice that after a while I would learn to control this emotionalness. That is another reason why I respect the hospice nurses so much. They go through these constant emotional times and are still able to provide efficient and compassionate care.

Overall, my clinical experience at hospice was incredibly impactful and gave me a deeper understanding of both nursing and human compassion. It challenged me emotionally, opened my eyes to the depth of care hospice patients and families receive, and reinforced the importance of empathy in nursing practice. While I realized that hospice may not be the right path for me emotionally, I gained a newfound respect for those who choose to work in this setting. Their ability to remain compassionate, grounded, and present is something I truly admire. This experience not only met my expectations but it exceeded them by showing me the power of emotional connection in patient care and reminding me why I chose to pursue nursing in the first place.