

Perception of Death and Dying on Nursing Students: Literature Review

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7-8-2022

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Death and dying are significant concerns brought to many healthcare professionals. Many nurses are on the front line of healthcare and experience the death of their patients daily. Some nurses can easily cope with the loss of their patients, while some are still grieving. Experiencing the death of a patient can cause emotional and psychological stress amongst the nursing staff. As nursing students, it is essential to understand the concept of death and dying. New graduate nurses often experience emotional exhaustion in the workplace, and the topic of death and dying can create an emotional shock. Dealing with and experiencing death can bring about many emotions and thoughts that affect a student's attitudes and behaviors. Knowing nursing students may or may not be involved in end-of-life care during nursing education, it is essential to understand how students perceive death and dying. Nursing students in the upcoming generations need the knowledge and self-awareness to cope with loss and prevent it from being a barrier in their work environment. The purpose is to assess nursing students' perceptions of death and dying and educate individuals on how to facilitate care and provide comfort to dying patients (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). Students often feel they rely heavily on personal knowledge instead of being provided structured education. Knowing nursing students' perceptions helps nurse educators know what areas to focus on when caring for a dying patient. Overall, providing the proper education to students helps strengthen one's ability to provide quality patient care.

Nursing Student's Perceptions of Death and Dying: A Descriptive Quantitative Study

The 2021 article *Nursing Students Perceptions of Death and Dying* by Mary Petrongolo and Rebecca Toothaker discusses nursing education about death and dying. The article focuses on determining how nursing students perceive death and dying. The research aims to gather data on the behaviors and attitudes of sophomore, junior, and senior nursing students. The students' emotions and personal background can impact how students respond to end-of-life situations. As new nursing graduates, end-of-life care can lead to anxiety and grief (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). Focusing on proper education and sufficient clinical experience helps nursing students develop situational and emotional awareness. The experience prepares individuals to provide care to dying patients without being negatively impacted by it (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). Overall, the purpose of the study is to consider the student's perceptions and build a curriculum so individuals can adequately manage the care of dying patients.

Key Points

A descriptive quantitative study explored the perceptions of sophomore, junior, and senior nursing students regarding death and dying. The single-site study assessed nursing students' perceptions of death. The research obtained a sample of individuals through convenience sampling nursing students enrolled in the undergraduate nursing program. Before conducting the study, the Institutional Review Board Committee approved the study. Researchers provided participants with an informed consent letter, which ensured the voluntary nature of the participation. A survey was then given to the participants to complete. The survey included demographic questions like gender, age, and educational level. The Death Attitude Profile- The revised survey measured personal views of death and dying. The DAP-R was a valid

and reliable tool with an alpha coefficient of 0.97. The Frommelt Attitudes Toward Care of the Dying survey was used to assess if the students with the most experience were comfortable providing end-of-life care (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). The DAP-R questionnaire contained 32 statements ranked on a 7-point Likert scale.

On the other hand, the FATCOD questionnaire gathered data on a 5-point Likert scale (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). One hundred two students participated in the study, and all the participants were 18. Thirty-nine participants in the study were seniors, 29 were junior, and 34 were junior. The DAP-R questionnaire showed a positive relationship between time on clinical experience and positive student attitudes toward death and dying (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). Moreover, the junior students had the highest average on the FATCOD questionnaire. The participants felt they were more comfortable providing end-of-life care. The senior students felt they could take full responsibility for patients at the end of life. Data in the study is significant because of the attribution to the perception of death and dying amongst nursing students and not by chance. All the tests were two-tailed, with a p-value of less than 0.5, which was considered statistically significant (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). The study concludes that clinical experience and academic level are positive indicators that help enhance dying patients' attitudes.

Assumptions

The study's author assumes that an increase in education on death and dying and a higher level of education can help create a positive outlook on death and dying. Education and end-of-life simulations can allow the student to obtain more practice in their clinical setting. Such education helps to break the fear of dying patients and improves one's attitudes and beliefs to better care for patients (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). The author states that small group discussion and group reflection are educational tactics that can benefit students. Participating in

group sessions can help increase the spiritual well-being of students. Moreover, providing stimulations in clinical settings prepares students for future encounters with patients who need end-of-life care (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). Overall, such educational tactics will cause significant improvements in patient care because students will increase their knowledge and skills in end-of-life care.

Deficit/Conclusion

In conclusion, nursing students can change their perceptions of death in several ways. Individuals receiving more individualized education on specific topics can significantly enhance their skills. The emotional aspect of death and dying changes as individuals become more open to accepting new ideas and approaches to providing care. Nursing students gain valuable experience through experiences like simulations, clinical rotations, and group discussions. According to the FAT COD and DAP-R questionnaires, individuals felt more comfortable treating end-of-life patients through increased education and higher education (Petrongolo & Toothaker, 2021). The author recommends that specific education be provided in nursing practice to provide quality patient care. It is essential to encourage future students to participate in necessary education to have a positive working environment. If nursing fails to accept the specific line of reasoning, the conclusion would be that students would not be able to adapt the necessary knowledge and skills. Nursing students cannot cope with the stressors related to death and dying. Also, individuals will become emotionally drained from the excessive number of dying patients. Thus, proper education is needed to prevent problems in the workplace.

References

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