

Client Comfort and End of Life Care Reflection

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What was learned from this scenario?

This scenario was exciting. There will be many encounters with patients suffering from terminal illnesses, including some patients considering palliative or hospice care. These patients often have families who do not want to see this happen. The families can often make this transition more difficult and stressful for the patient. The nurse is an advocate for the patient and the family. The nurse should acknowledge the patient and the family's concerns while respecting the patient's wishes and needs. In this scenario, the patient can still make her own decisions regarding her medical care; therefore, she should have a decision on how and when her comfort/end-of-life care will go into effect.

Identify the biggest takeaways.

a) Explain the factors that influenced this decision.

Many factors influence the decision to pursue comfort/end-of-life care. One of the factors includes the patient's well-being and stage of terminal illness. An alert and oriented patient should be able to decide when and if they want to pursue hospice or comfort care. The family frequently affects the patient's opinions and thoughts due to their lack of readiness to accept that the end of life is near.

What are some of the main problems or key issues expressed in the scenario?

Some of the main problems or critical issues expressed in this scenario included the patient being in pain and the family being unwilling to decide to be supportive. The patient seemed to know what she wanted and needed at this time. She was considering end-of-life care and wanted to consider hospice care. The family members involved, two daughters, were unable to agree. One daughter expressed a desire to support the mother in her decision to implement end-of-life care, whereas the other daughter was not as willing to agree. The patient has the most

say when it includes their medical care, but often the patient wants to please their family members as well. The daughters were not directly asking their mother her desires, but instead trying to make the decisions for her disregarding what she has expressed wanting.

What were some of the challenging decisions the nurse needed to make?

The nurse had to make challenging decisions regarding the patient's medication, the choice for hospice, and the decision to provide a comfortable environment for the patient. The nurse faced decisions that had to include the patient and family members.

a) Describe the rationale behind these decisions.

The nurse faced a few challenging decisions. The patient wanted more information provided to the family members on hospice care, and the daughter disregarded this. The nurse had to decide to attempt to understand where the daughter was concerned most to help further explain. The nurse also had to ensure the patient had peace and the ability to get rest; therefore, the nurse had to intervene and inform the family that they needed to allow their mother time to rest. The nurse also had to determine if the patient needed the medication when one of the daughters insisted on it. Another decision the nurse made was to include the nursing director and attending provider to discuss end-of-life care and further education to the family to help them further understand the patient's needs and wants. These decisions, although difficult, had a significant effect on the patient's level of care. The nurse advocates for their patient, including making challenging decisions to ensure their safety, recovery, and comfort.

What factors influenced the nursing decisions and responses during the scenario?

Some influencing factors that impacted the nursing decisions and responses include the family members and patients' needs and wants. The nurse wants to support family members while ensuring patient comfort.

a) Explain the response.

The nurse wanted to be present for the patient while respecting and supporting the family. The family and their needs influenced the nurse, but also the needs of the patient. An explanation is regarding the patient needing pain medication. One daughter stated it was needed, while the other stated the mother did not want pain medications. At this moment, the patient had not even decided or spoken of wanting or needing medication. The nurse wants to respect the visitors and family and advocate for their patient's wants and needs. Therefore, the nurse stated that they should ask the patient first. Another example is when the kids were visiting and being disruptive. The nurse should be sure that the patient has a relaxing environment to get rest.

b) How will a nurse respond if this scenario presents again in the future?

The nurse should talk to the patient before making decisions that impact the patient. If the patient is in a state of understanding, alert, and oriented, they ultimately get to determine their care. The nurse should respect and support the family but advocate for the patient's needs and wants. All decisions should be discussed with the patient and family if the patient is okay with that.

Have similar situations been experienced in current clinical rotations?

I have not experienced similar situations in clinical rotations, but I have experienced similar situations when working in long-term care. There was a patient put on hospice care. The

family was understandably distraught. However, they were trying to make decisions without regarding the patient's desires. The family often tried to make decisions regarding the patient without discussing the wants and needs of the patient.

a) How did nursing or others respond to the situation? Please explain.

The nursing staff involved did their best to support the family by providing education and referring them to resources that may be helpful for what they are going through. The staff was concerned for the patient regarding wanting the patient to feel comfortable. The nursing staff made it a point to always discuss decisions with the patient before making any decisions that could directly impact the patient. The patient's wants and needs are essential and considered. This scenario was exciting. There will be many encounters with patients suffering from terminal illnesses, including some patients considering palliative or hospice care. These patients often have families who do not want to see this happen. The families can often make this transition more difficult and stressful for the patient. The nurse is an advocate for the patient and the family. The nurse should acknowledge the patient and the family's concerns while respecting the patient's wishes and needs. In this scenario, the patient can still make her own decisions regarding her medical care; therefore, she should decide how and when her comfort/end-of-life care will go into effect.

b) Describe successful communication strategies used or experienced in the clinical setting.

There was much communication between the staff and the patient. The nursing staff also discussed the importance of communication with the family. They ensured that the family needs open communication with the patient's desires

and needs. Communication was brought to the patient and family at once to determine desired outcomes and care plans for the patient.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having families discuss treatment options, including end-of-life decisions before a loved one becomes ill or early in a terminal illness.

The family often is not ready to let go or think about their loved one passing away. The family being unaccepting creates difficulty for the patient and the family. The patient does not want to disappoint or sadden the family but often may be ready to be placed in hospice care. The patient may feel unheard if the family refuses to accept this decision. The patient may be aware of what they desire but not make that decision based on the emotions of family members. However, the advantage of discussing treatment options, including end-of-life decisions, is that the family can prepare for that outcome. The family will be able to discuss decisions that need to be made with their loved ones to prepare for end-of-life care. Many advantages and disadvantages come into consideration when discussing end-of-life care with families regarding their loved ones.