

Nurse Mental Health: Quality Improvement

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Quality improvement is an important nursing competency that needs to be developed as a healthcare professional to improve the quality and safety of the healthcare system (Quality and Safety Education for Nurses [QSEN], 2020). Quality improvement uses existing data to monitor care process outcomes and create and test new methods for these care processes to improve the healthcare system continuously (QSEN, 2020). Quality improvement helps healthcare professionals describe strategies for learning the outcomes of the care processes, the effect healthcare professionals have on the outcomes, and how to change those care processes to improve them further (QSEN, 2020). Quality improvement also helps healthcare professionals seek information about quality improvement projects and information specific to the population they care for, identify gaps in the care being provided compared to best practices, implement changes in daily work, and measure the effectiveness of the change using flow charts, tables and other data gathering tools (QSEN, 2020). With quality improvement, healthcare professionals will learn how to appreciate the importance of quality improvement, how it is an essential part of the healthcare profession, and how important the role they and others in the healthcare team play when implementing improvement (QSEN, 2020). Nurses have many roles when it comes to caring for patients, and some of the roles can significantly impact their mental health. One crucial role that nurses have is engaging in end-of-life conversations with patients. This can have a significant impact on a nurse's mental health because their patient is dying, and there is not anything that can be done to stop that. How these nurses self-regulate is essential in how they deal with the mental stress of death while still providing their patients with the best quality of care.

Article Summary

Nurses play an important role in having end-of-life conversations with patients to ensure they receive quality care that follows their wishes (Du et al., 2024). This study is based in China, where they use the Heart to Heart Cards Game (HHCG), a tool to help nurses initiate end-of-life conversations and better understand their patient's wishes (Du et al., 2024). However, these end-of-life conversations can significantly impact nurse's mental health (Du et al., 2024). This study aimed to identify nurses' self-regulatory process after end-of-life conversations with advanced cancer patients (Du et al., 2024). Seventeen nurses from four different hospitals and a hospice unit in China were interviewed (Du et al., 2024). The researchers found that personality played a significant role in how nurses self-regulate, whereas a more extroverted personality had a more adaptive regulation process (Du et al., 2024). Also, the knowledge and experience of the nurses affected self-regulation significantly (Du et al., 2024). The study also found that nurses did not share their negative emotions with their families; therefore, they did not seek this extra support (Du et al., 2024). Nurses also experienced self-doubt when they could not fulfill their patient's wishes, which caused some to experience thoughts of resignation (Du et al., 2024).

Introduction

This qualitative study examined nurses' self-regulatory process after end-of-life conversations with advanced cancer patients (Du et al., 2024). Researchers found that nurses with more extroverted personalities had better adaptive regulation processes (Du et al., 2024). The amount of experience the nurses had also impacted their self-regulatory process (Du et al., 2024). Some nurses experienced self-doubt when they could not complete their patients' wishes, which led to their thoughts of resigning (Du et al., 2024). This article related to nurses' mental

health by examining how these end-of-life conversations impacted the nurses and their mental health.

Overview

This article directly related to nurse mental health by examining the impact end-of-life conversations with advanced cancer patients had on nurses (Du et al., 2024). This study can help nursing by bringing awareness to the importance of nurses' mental health. End-of-life conversations are one of the many hard things that nurses must do, and it can lead to burnout. Implementing help for the nurse's mental health when end-of-life conversations need to be done is important in improving nurse burnout and helping the nurses with their mental health. This article relates to the quality improvement competency by providing additional research that can be used to develop new methods for nurses' mental healthcare processes (QSEN, 2020). It also helps nurses and other healthcare members seek new information about end-of-life care to learn how to improve it and the care they are giving. This article used tables and flow charts to present the results of their study (QSEN, 2020). It showed how valuable it was for these nurses to participate in the interviews to contribute to this study's outcomes (QSEN, 2020).

Quality Improvement

Quality improvement efforts can be implemented in hospitals that care for advanced cancer patients. During the pre-implementation stage, further research data would have to be examined regarding the outcomes and effects the changes had. Also, any identified gaps would have to be examined, and strategies to remedy them would have to be formed (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, n.d.). In the intra-implementation stage, changes would be implemented, such as

providing nurses with counseling support, providing end-of-life care training programs, additional training in self-regulation skills, or promoting community awareness in having advanced care planning (Du et al., 2024). Lastly, in the post-implementation stage, the progress of improvement will be monitored. With positive results, the changes can be implemented in other hospitals and communities (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, n.d.). These changes could significantly impact the hospital, patients, and nurses. The costs for the hospital could increase due to implementing more training programs. Patient satisfaction could be impacted by more nurses being better trained to initiate these conversations. Patient safety could be impacted by the nurses providing them with a better quality of care due to their understanding of their patient's wishes for end-of-life care preferences. Lastly, nursing safety could be impacted by nurses having better self-regulating processes, improving their mental health, and relieving the stress leading to burnout.

Application to Nursing

End-of-life conversations significantly impact nurses' mental health, and how nurses self-regulate is an important factor in how well they can manage that stress. Seeking out effective mental health support is one component that nurses who experienced stress related to end-of-life conversations found to be lacking. Implementing effective interventions and programs into practice is one way to improve the mental health of nurses providing end-of-life care. Following current guidelines will help implement standards of practice to improve the care given to end-of-life patients and provide the nurses with the knowledge they may feel they are lacking. Further research must continuously be done to find ways to support the mental health of nurses and improve end-of-life care.

Practice

The mental health of nurses is significantly affected when providing end-of-life care and having end-of-life conversations. Having effective interventions available can significantly reduce the stress these nurses may have. In a different study, researchers conducted various interventions in one year to reduce the stress of nurses who provide end-of-life care for terminal patients (Lv, 2023). One of the interventions used was Soul Moisturizing Hall, where nurses met one-on-one with psychiatrists twice a month to discuss their problems and be provided with a lecture on topics related to end-of-life care, such as empathy, death education, palliative care, and ways to relieve stress (Lv, 2023). Another intervention was the Balint group, which is an integrative group therapy that combines concepts of emotional support, narrative medicine, and self-reflection to help the nurses learn how their nurse-patient relationship can be used as a therapeutically and improve the nurse's communication skills, relieve their stress, and promote professional growth (Lv, 2023). The other interventions included were one-on-one interviews with a mental health provider or a senior nurse whenever the nurses felt a need to talk and routine debriefing sessions following a patient's death (Lv, 2023). The researchers found that the nurses reported that these interventions helped relieve psychological distress, improve their stress management, and improve their mental health (Lv, 2023). The results of this study show that implementing interventions such as the ones listed above can effectively reduce stress and improve the mental health of nurses providing end-of-life care (Lv, 2023).

Education

Nurses have many roles and responsibilities when providing end-of-life care for patients. The American Nurses Association has established recommendations to help improve, guide, and

provide a foundation for end-of-life care. In practice, healthcare facilities should aim to have a standard of end-of-life care for nurses to have a foundation for end-of-life care (American Nurses Association Center for Ethics and Human Rights [ANA Center for Ethics and Human Rights], 2024). Nurses will have the basic skills in recognizing and managing symptoms such as pain and dyspnea (ANA Center for Ethics and Human Rights, 2024). Nurses will also have strong communication skills to discuss the care plan and patient wishes with the patient, family, and other team members (ANA Center for Ethics and Human Rights, 2024). Nurses will know their state's policies on end-of-life care (ANA Center for Ethics and Human Rights, 2024). For education, additional programs should be given to nurses related to end-of-life care and support for their well-being (ANA Center for Ethics and Human Rights, 2024). These are a few of the recommendations made by the American Nurses Association that can be used to improve the way end-of-life care is provided and help nurses become more skilled and confident in the care they provide.

Research

Many interventions and programs are available to help nurses' mental health. However, further research is needed to assess which interventions and programs are most appropriate for supporting these nurses and how to implement them effectively in actual practice (Du et al., 2024). Because all nurses have different self-regulation styles, more than one intervention must be available to cater to everyone's needs (Du et al., 2024). Also, further research can be done to study the effectiveness of specific end-of-life training programs that can help improve nurses' communication skills during end-of-life conversations.

Conclusion

Quality improvement is important in the healthcare field and necessary to improve the quality and safety of the healthcare system (QSEN, 2020). Quality improvement uses outcome data to create new methods of improving the healthcare system (QSEN, 2020). Quality improvement can help healthcare professionals learn their effect on outcomes and how to change care processes to improve them further (QSEN, 2020). Quality improvement also helps healthcare professionals measure the effectiveness of the change by using flow charts and other tools to gather data (QSEN, 2020). With quality improvement, healthcare professionals will learn how essential it is to improve healthcare (QSEN, 2020). The nursing profession comes with many roles, and one specific role that nurses have that impacts their mental health is engaging in end-of-life conversations. Quality improvement is important in changing how the mental health of nurses providing end-of-life care is supported. Implementing changes to the available support can result in a better quality of end-of-life care and reduced burnout. Further improvement in nursing practice, education, and continuing research are important in quality improvement to bring awareness of the importance of nurses' mental health and initiate change in the healthcare system.

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