Palliative and Hospice Care Reflection

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How can the nurse ensure that a client receiving palliative/hospice care is kept comfortable? What are some ways that the nurse could provide for the psychosocial and spiritual comfort of the client?

The nurse can ensure that the client receiving palliative care/hospice care is kept comfortable by asking the client. They can ask questions such as, “How are you feeling?” and “Is there anything I can do for you to make you more comfortable?”. If the client is unresponsive, the nurse can assess the client for any manifestations. For example, if the nurse finds the client using accessory muscles when breathing, the nurse can determine they are not able to breathe easily. Also, the nurse can monitor their vitals. If the patient’s heart rate, blood pressure, and respirations are increased, the nurse can determine that the client might be experiencing pain. Some ways the nurse can provide psychosocial comfort to the client is through active listening, offering reassurance, providing information, and showing compassion. Some ways the nurse can provide spiritual comfort to a client is by reaching out to spiritual officials, respecting religious practices and beliefs, and maintaining a non-judgmental approach.

How can the nurse provide support for the family/loved ones of the dying client?

The nurse can provide support for the family/loved ones of a dying client by being compassionate, offering space and open communication, implementing active listening, and encouraging the family to participate in the client’s care. Also, the nurse should provide the client’s family/loved ones with information on what the client is experiencing and why. Knowing what is happening to the patient can be more comforting than not knowing.

What feelings occurred when interacting with a person with a life-limiting illness?

When interacting with a person with a life-limiting illness, a person my feel empathy and compassion towards the patient as they know they do not have much time left. Others may also feel a sense of sadness, anger, and helplessness, knowing that nothing can be done other than to keep the patient comfortable.

Were the feelings or emotions adequately handled?

I feel that everyone has their own coping skills when experiencing approaching death of a loved one. Therefore, many people experience and handle these emotions differently. Handling death is not an easy thing for most people. I feel as long as they are able to cope with healthy methods, talk to those around them about their feelings, and are able to accept their family or loved one's situation, they have handled their emotions adequately.

Was there adequate communication with the ill person?

If the patient is responsive, it is always important to ensure adequate communication. The patient should understand the process of their declining health, what certain manifestations may mean, and what they should expect as their death approaches. The patient should be asked what they would like to be done with their body once they have passed and what comfort measures they would like to be implemented in their care.

How did the person with the life-limiting illness feel during their interactions?

A person with a life-limiting illness should feel as comfortable as they can with their situation. While life-limiting illnesses are difficult for the family and loved ones of a client, they can also be extremely stressful on the client. The client should be able to cope with the situation in healthy ways and be able to accept what is to come in the future. The nurse should allow open communication to the client to answer any questions they may have and provide constant support to the client during this hard time.

Could the interactions have been improved in any way? How?

Maintaining the comfort of the client and their family/loved ones is the most important action a nurse should take during palliative and hospice care. The nurse and the client's interprofessional team should be able to assist the client and their loved ones in whatever needs are necessary. If the client's current interprofessional team is unable to provide them with a need, it is crucial to reach out to other teams to ensure the client is receiving the best possible care they can.