Compassionate Care: A Focus on Dying Well

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Introduction:
The primary purpose of this project was to create a trajectory towards bridging the gap in services; promoting quality and dignity of life for terminally ill patients; and developing a structured comprehensive training program for nurses and health care providers to effectively meet the needs of terminally ill oncology patients.

Method(s):
Databases from PubMed and Ovid were searched for relevant studies published from 2004 to 2008. Key words used were end-of-life care, palliative care, cancer, and oncology. Literature was reviewed for evidence based practices relative to our institution's need to expand in end-of-life care.

Results:
Analysis of the Compassionate Care Program was employed to examine the outcomes of the planned objectives. Selected employees attended the AACN ELNEC training. The selected trainers in collaboration with the nurse manager and nursing supervisor were required to expand the teaching curriculum as needed for inpatient and outpatient areas, schedule teaching times and places, provide education to assigned oncology inpatient/outpatient nurses and medical staff, develop a compassionate care critical pathway, develop standardized patient education/information resource packets, and initiate compassionate care referrals to identified terminal ill patients.

Discussion:
As people die from terminal cancer, researchers will always seek to find more effective treatment methods. This traditional focus unfortunately leaves a void for the population that will die from the terminal disease with all too often limited options to promote compassionate care and dignity at end-of-life. This project has the potential to promote a focus on dying well for the terminally ill cancer patient across the continuum by implementing a comprehensive training program for nurses and health care providers to effectively meet the needs of this targeted population.
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