C5-8: Insight into ICU nurses’ experiences in providing terminal care

Author List:
Presenting Author: Laura Espinosa
Additional Author: Laura Espinosa

Address: 6565 Fannin M584
Houston, Texas 77030
United States
Ph: 713-441-0651
Fax:
Email: laespinosa@tmhs.org
Institution: Methodist Hospital

Presentation Preference: Late Breaker poster submission

Abstract Categories:
Thematic Areas: End of Life Issues

Abstract:
Introduction: One in five Americans die while using intensive care service—a number that is expected to increase as society ages. Intensive care nurses shifts from providing aggressive care to end-of-life care, whereas traditional goals of critical care center on curative interventions for acutely ill patients.

Method(s): This phenomenological research study explored the experiences of nurses providing terminal care in the ICU. Purposive sample consisted of 18 registered nurses delivering terminal care in an ICU who participated in semi-structured individual interviews or focus groups. Colaizzi’s steps for data analysis were used to identify themes.

Results: Three major themes consisted of (a) barriers to optimal care, (b) internal conflict, and (c) coping. Barriers to care reflected nurses lack of involvement in the plan of care; differences in focus between medicine and nursing practice models, disagreement among physicians; concerns about futile care and unnecessary suffering; dealing with unrealistic expectations of the family; and the lack of experience and education to deal with terminal care provision. Internal conflict revealed feelings of relief when care goals shifted; a desire for patient comfort and to provide good memories for family; a sense of abandonment on the part of nurses; difficulty with medication administration; and difficulty in dealing with the death of younger patients. Coping reflected the positive and sometimes negative strategies that nurses used to manage terminal care. Strategies included building trust in order to communicate and educate the family; crying; humor; talking to others about terminal care; avoiding care for terminal patients; and developing a “crusty” nurse attitude.
Discussion & Conclusions: Conclusions derived from this study include: barriers exist for intensive care nurses in providing optimum terminal care; provision of terminal care represents a significant personal and professional struggle for intensive care nurses; and intensive care nurses develop coping mechanisms. Recommendations for future studies: study the effects of terminal care educational support programs; and examine the effects of a nurse support group to enable effective nurse coping for intensive care nurses who deliver terminal care.

Abstract History:
This abstract has been published or accepted for publication. This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

Financial Disclosure:
No, I (or a member of my immediate family) have not received something of value* from or own stock (or stock options) in a commercial company or institution related directly or indirectly to the subject of my presentation.

FDA Disclosure:
I will not be describing any pharmaceutical and/or medical device.

Non-Exclusive License:

Submitted by:
laespinosa@tmhs.org