



Nursing Care for Cancer Patients in the End Stages of Life: Navigating the Challenges and Ambiguities

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Dear Editor,

Some diseases, including cancers, do not have a good prognosis. Some patients equate a cancer diagnosis with death; those facing a life-threatening diagnosis such as cancer are inevitably confronted with the phenomenon of death. Most cancer patients are hospitalized at the time of death and require end-of-life care. End-of-life care is defined as care provided in situations where the illness is leading the individual towards death (1). Nurses are essential members of the healthcare team and play a crucial role in caring for patients in the final stages of life. Patients at the end of life require extensive nursing care beyond common medical interventions. End-of-life care is primarily supportive, focusing on both the physical and psychological well-being of the patient. The main goal of end-of-life care for cancer patients is to ensure a peaceful death for the patient while providing comfort and solace to their family (2). One of the most challenging experiences in nursing is helping patients understand and accept death. Caring for patients at the end of life requires a deep understanding of their needs. The understanding and attitudes of nurses towards these patients significantly influence the care behaviors they provide during the end-of-life stage (3). Studies indicate that nurses encounter challenges and ambiguities when providing end-of-life care, complicating the caregiving process. Nurses must deliver optimal care to help patients cope with life-limiting conditions and ensure they depart with dignity (4).

The first point to consider when caring for these patients is that the care and services provided by nurses at the end of life should be based on the patient's culture and religious beliefs, the patient's wishes, and the presence of loved ones. Additionally, attention should be paid to human dignity and respect. Each patient enters the care process with a set of values. Nurses in end-of-life care should consider cultural and religious values, the wishes and needs of patients, as well as human dignity. Such care brings satisfaction and comfort to the patient at the end of life (5). Another challenge when caring for cancer patients in the final stages of life is helping them accept their current situation. Nurses

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should understand the patient during the end-of-life phase and assist them in accepting death and adapting to their circumstances. Additionally, paying attention to the patients' wishes and needs is another important issue that nurses should strive to address. The goal of end-of-life care is to focus on the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of patients at this stage. The quality of nursing care is enhanced when nurses feel a sense of responsibility for the patients' needs within the scope of their caregiving duties so that the patient feels comfort and ease after these interventions are provided (6). Another important aspect to consider when caring for cancer patients in the final stages of life is the formation and maintenance of a presence-based relationship with the patient. Establishing the communication during nursing interventions helps to maintain trust and adherence to treatment in these patients, while also addressing their feelings of being supported and meeting their emotional needs. Attention to human dignity is one of the most important factors to consider when caring for these patients. Respecting the patients' independence and their right to make decisions regarding their treatment are among the issues taken into account in the context of preserving human dignity (7).

The individual characteristics of nurses, such as friendliness and patience, as well as professional

traits like the ability to provide end-of-life care, can directly influence the way care is delivered. Personal, social, and emotional qualities that foster professional vitality and enhance the ability to identify patients' needs can significantly impact the quality of nursing care provided. At the end-of-life stages, patients require more human interaction and care than medication. Humanistic care is a holistic approach that focuses on all aspects of the patients' existence (8).

It is concluded that nursing care for cancer patients in the final stages of life is complex and multidimensional, requiring consideration of all aspects of care. All nursing efforts should aim for holistic care, despite facing numerous challenges and ambiguities, often likened to navigating through fog. A holistic perspective enables nurses to provide quality, value-based, and supportive care. It seems that this approach to care can lead to a sense of good care for nurses and a good death for patients.

Keywords: Goals, Hospice care, Humans, Neoplasms, Patient care team, Patient care, Psychological well-being, Religion, Respect, Trust

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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