

Advocating for Interprofessional Palliative Care Experiences in Pediatric Nursing Curriculum

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Background

- Quality of Life is improved when the palliative approach to care is utilized for children with serious illness and their families (Marcus et al., 2020).
- The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) compels baccalaureate education to demonstrate competencies including hospice, palliative, and supportive care (AACN 2021, 2022; ANA & HPNA, 2017; Lipstein et al., 2016).
- Safe, high-quality, accessible, patient-centered healthcare requires interprofessional practice (IPEC, 2023; Seaman et al., 2020).
- The effect of an interprofessional palliative care clinical experience on prelicensure nursing students is not well described (Liaw et al., 2021; Starks et al., 2018).



References

Purpose

To assess the impact on a baccalaureate nursing student's palliative care learning during an immersive experience in a pediatric long-term care facility.

Methodology

- In this case study, a baccalaureate nursing student embarked on a six-week immersive palliative care fellowship at a long-term care center that serves 169 children with severe medical complexity.
- Prior student knowledge included completing the End-of-Life Consortium (ELNEC) Undergraduate/New-Graduate Curriculum Modules (AACN, 2024).
- The clinical immersion involved shadowing 19 interprofessional healthcare workers from various specialties.
- Student responsibilities included recording weekly journal entries to gain insights into the personal and professional growth experienced during the immersive fellowship.



Results

Significant enhancement of student's competencies in the field of palliative pediatric care:

Exposed to pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions and therapies.

Witnessed clear end-of-life communication skills.

Engaged in honest, empathetic, and age-appropriate conversations that decreased anxieties for the resident and family.

Experienced collaborative engagement amongst interprofessional teams.

Deepened understanding of the role that a holistic approach to healthcare plays in quality-of-life.

Observed team interactions toward residents demonstrating safety, feelings of love and belonging, and feeling valued as an individual.

Developed emotional resilience by using the palliative approach to healthcare workers to prevent compassion fatigue and emotional drainage.

Conclusion

This fellowship experience underscores the critical need for early exposure to immersive palliative care opportunities in baccalaureate nursing education. Improving quality of life for patients of all ages requires proper preparation of the new generation of nurses, ensuring that they are equipped to practice based on research that suggests improved patient outcomes with palliative and holistic interventions.

Implementing such immersive experiences in nursing curricula will support a wave of nurses taught to address the emotional, psycho-social, and spiritual needs of patients and their families, in addition to traditional physical care and clinical competency. Compassionate, emotionally resilient, patient-centered advocates offer the best quality of care for those living with serious illness.

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