How Culture Influences Palliative Care Needs

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Culture and Palliative Care

Palliative care can be appreciated through the lens of quality of life and the influence of personal and cultural history.

This presentation will focus on both value of cultural sensitivity and the influence of personal perspective to improve quality of life as it relates to palliative care.

Statement from ELNEC on Culture

End of Life Nursing Education Curriculum

• Major influence on end-of-life care
  – Many dimensions of culture
• Self-assessment of culture
• Culturally sensitive care
• Interdisciplinary care

CULTURE

• A system of shared symbols
• Patterns of relating
• Provides security, integrity, belonging
• Constantly evolving
• Sometimes includes spirituality, ethnicity, education

ELNEC, 2009

Ways Culture Informs Quality of Life

• Making meaning of illness
• Includes world view, beliefs, fears, myths, birth and death
• Not limited to race or ethnicity
• Increasing U.S. diversity
• Health disparities

Cultural Assessments

• Patient/family/community
• Birthplace
• Ethnic identity, community
• Decision making
• Language and communication
• Religion
• Food preferences/prohibitions
• Economic situation
• Health beliefs regarding death, grief, pain
### What is Culture for us?

How many cultures influence your life and your family?
What are some of the beliefs about illness and coping with life threatening illness influence you?
How hard is it for you to have a conversation about “difficult” things… like life threatening situations?

### What are your messages to you?

- Self awareness is critical to the next step…. It is a transition
- Self-judgment or judging others
  - Self assessment
  - Cultural beliefs of co-workers

### Did you ever wonder…?

- Who said those words which you just gave voice to…?
- Listening
- Teaching and learning about yourself…

### Do you have an internal guide?

### Importance of Culture in palliative care

- Helps us identify ways to augment culturally competent care
- Helps us to expand the boundaries of language

### The Journey

- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- Success/failure
- Change in diagnosis
- Change in prognosis
- Change in goals of treatment
What communication might help?
• Listening to yourself… first
• Listen to the language the patient, family uses… and reflect that back in your dialogue…
• Invitation to encounter the meaning of life.

What Next…
• How can we address these individual
  – Articulate questions targeting meaning of life
  – Informing those questions specifically to the patient
  – Utilize language used
• What about time?
  – Technique…. Emerges from a technique from Gendlin’s Focusing…. Another question I ask
    • What concerns you most?
    • What stands between you and feeling OK with some of this…?

Process vs. Product
• focus on “process” as opposed to “product”.
• Process is the meaning of life.
• allows for a freedom of response … invites change in a temporal manner…

Where is this leading?
• As we live in the environment and milieu of culture, the persons, ours and our nursing or professional role
• Our focus on quality of life can be accessed by open ended questions…
  – “what will make your life easier?”
  – “How do you think I might help…?”

The narrative is not a tale of truth
• Narrative can be fictive
• Can be used to broaden boundaries and inform new meanings
• They change in the process of self awareness
• Listening with heart and ears allow the personal narrative to emerge

Summary
• Quality of life is like a kaleidoscope…all of pieces will make meaning…
The narrative, listening is a different way, using the persons language and metaphor…allows both the person and the professional to move through illness in a process of expanding self awareness.
Resources

- The Center for Palliative Care Education [http://www.capc.org](http://www.capc.org)
- Hospice and Palliative Care Nurses Association: HPNA.org

References