

Module 1

Introduction to Palliative Nursing Care

Module Overview

This module creates the foundation for the ELNEC-For Veterans (VA) curriculum. It is an overview of the need to improve palliative care throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Defining the role of the nurse as a member of an interdisciplinary team in providing quality care to Veterans in a variety of clinical settings is essential. Basic definitions and principles of hospice and palliative care are presented within a quality of life (QOL) framework.

Key Messages

- VA has made a commitment to improve and advance palliative care for all Veterans and their families.
- Veterans may experience unique end-of-life issues.
- There are gaps in current interdisciplinary systems of care for Veterans and families at the end of life across venues and settings of care.
- There are opportunities for enhanced collaboration among interdisciplinary systems of care for Veterans and families at the end of life.
- Families of Veterans may have unique bereavement issues.
- Nursing has had a long history of caring for patients and families experiencing end-of-life/palliative care issues.
- Caring for the dying means not only “doing for” but also “being with.” Palliative nursing care combines caring, communication, knowledge & skill.

Objectives

At the completion of this module, the participant will be able to:

1. Describe the role of the nurse in providing quality palliative care for Veterans.
2. Identify the need for collaboration with interdisciplinary team members while implementing the nursing role in palliative care.
3. Recognize the unique demographics, health care economics, and service delivery for Veterans that necessitates improved professional preparation in palliative care.
4. Describe the philosophy and principles of hospice and palliative care that can be integrated across settings to affect quality care at the end of life for all patients.
5. Discuss aspects of assessing physiological, psychological, spiritual, and social domains of Veterans and families facing a life-threatening illness or event.
6. Explain various resources available to Veterans and their families.