

ELNEC- For Veterans

END-OF-LIFE NURSING EDUCATION
CONSORTIUM

Palliative Care For Veterans

Module 7 Final Hours

PARTICIPANT OUTLINE

Module 7: Final Hours Participant Outline

- I. INTRODUCTION
 - A. The nurse, dying and death
 - B. The nurse as advocate
 - C. Care of the dying is interdisciplinary
 - D. Dying is an individualized, personal experience

- II. PATIENT AND FAMILY PREPARATION THROUGH ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN ANY PRACTICE SETTING
 - A. Open, honest communication as death approaches
 - B. Provide information in simple, uncomplicated terms
 - C. Maintain presence
 - D. Artificial nutrition and hydration
 - E. What about CPR?
 - F. Dignity conserving care
 - 1. Attitude
 - 2. Behavior
 - 3. Compassion
 - 4. Dialogue
 - G. The dying older adult

- III. TWO ROADS TO DEATH: SIGNS, SYMPTOMS AND NURSING INTERVENTIONS
 - A. Determining prognosis
 - B. Psychological and spiritual symptoms
 - 1. Fear of the dying process
 - 2. Fear of abandonment
 - 3. Fear of the unknown
 - 4. Nearing death awareness
 - 5. Withdrawal from family, friends and/or caregivers
 - 6. Increased focus on spiritual issues
 - C. Artificial nutrition and hydration at the end of life
 - D. Frequency of common symptoms
 - E. Physical signs and symptoms vary
 - 1. Confusion, disorientation, delirium
 - 2. Unconsciousness
 - 3. Weakness/fatigue
 - 4. Surge of energy
 - 5. Drowsiness/sleeping
 - 6. Restlessness/agitation
 - 7. Fever
 - 8. Bowel changes
 - 9. Decreased oral intake
 - 10. Incontinence

11. Pain

- IV. PAIN DURING THE FINAL HOURS OF LIFE
 - A. Assessment and management of pain is critical
 - B. Opioids
 - C. Myoclonus

- V. INTRACTABLE PAIN AND OTHER SYMPTOMS AT THE END OF LIFE
 - A. Assessment and management can be a challenge
 - B. Sedation
 - C. VHA ethics of palliative sedation
 - D. Treatment
 - E. Comfort measures/emotional support

- VI. IMMINENT DEATH
 - A. Universal symptoms of imminent death
 - 1. Decreased urine output
 - 2. Cold and mottled extremities
 - 3. Vital sign changes
 - 4. Respiratory congestion including respiratory bubbling
 - 5. Death rattle
 - 6. Delirium and confusion
 - 7. Restlessness
 - B. Management of symptoms related to imminent death
 - C. The death vigil
 - 1. Family desires/preferences
 - 2. Common fears
 - 3. Nursing interventions
 - 4. Honoring culture

- VII. WITHDRAWAL OF LIFE SUPPORT
 - A. Decision-making
 - B. Supporting the staff

- VIII. DEATH
 - A. Signs and symptoms of death
 - 1. Absence of heart beat/respirations
 - 2. Pupils fixed
 - 3. Color
 - 4. Body temperature drops
 - 5. Muscles, sphincters relax
 - B. Communicating the death

- IX. CARE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE DEATH
 - A. Preparing the family
 - B. Nursing responsibilities for care after death

1. Removal of tubes, medical supplies and equipment
 2. Bathe, dress and position the body
 3. Honor culture
 4. Initiate bereavement support
 5. Plans for burial/embalming
 6. Removal of the body
 7. Assistance with phone calls and notification of other healthcare providers
 8. Organ/tissue transplantation
- C. Death of a parent: Care for the child
- D. Family members will always remember the final hours of their loved ones life
- E. Respect the dying Veteran and the family and comrades he/she leaves behind

X. CONCLUSION