

Composure: Empowering nurses to Care for Dying Patients

Full Name: Maureen Ben-Nun

Address: Ha Palmach 3 Mazkeret Batia 76804

Phone: +972 (08) 9340813

email: morinbe@clalit.org.il

Credentials: RN B.Sc

Employer: Kaplan Medical Center Rehovot Israel.

Most people want to die at home, but most will die in institutions (1). Palliative care principles offer dignity and relief to the dying, but are still not prevalent in general hospitals. Many nurses in the acute setting feel uncomfortable with caring for the dying. This discomfort can result in avoidance and isolating of the dying.

COMPOSURE (2) is the ability to be a calm, caring and compassionate presence at the bedside of the dying patient. Composure can be taught, and nurses instructed in palliative principles and techniques. This presentation describes a course given by the Management of a general acute hospital to give nurses training in caring for the dying.

Objectives:

- 1) To teach composure as a tool for nurses to use when caring for the dying.
- 2) To be able to change the goal of saving life to one of preserving dignity and family stability.
- 3) To give nurses knowledge of ethics and palliative principles necessary for good care of the dying.

The Course: A workshop setting, facilitated by nurses for nurses. 2 questionnaires, the Death Anxiety Scale (DAS) and one exploring the opinions of the nurse on caring for the dying were administered pre and post course.

Collage, an Art therapy technique, was used to explore nurses' feelings.

End of Life as a concept was discussed and the importance of the nurse at the bedside of the dying was established. Palliative nursing principles and theory was taught. Role playing was used to demonstrate techniques of Breaking Bad News; Verbal and nonverbal communication and empathetic interaction.

Results: No change was demonstrated in DAS after the course. Nurses reported increased confidence in dealing with the dying and the bereaved families. The factor considered most important when dealing with End of Life care was **Teamwork**.

Conclusion: Nurses need extra training to use when caring for the dying. Universal themes and issues can be strengthened by the use of training programs. The vulnerable dying are cared for when nurse are educated and empowered to act

References

- 1)Steinhauser et al (2000), Annals of Internal Medicine.
- 2)Hudak C. et al(2002) Critical Care Nursing: a Holistic Approach.