

UCHSC Nursing Hospice and Palliative Experience

Overview

This experience will provide you with an introduction to the care of persons with terminal illness. The experience will highlight principles of hospice and palliative care through interactions with patients, families, and providers in community-based hospice settings. A debriefing session with course facilitators will highlight key aspects of hospice care, answer your questions, and provide opportunities to share your experiences of the day.

Rationale

Despite rapid advances in health technology during the past 40 years, medical care for patients with chronic and advanced illness remains woefully inadequate. Studies have demonstrated prominent deficiencies that include:

- Frequent patient distress from pain and other symptoms
- High financial burden and lack of support for family caregivers
- Frequent miscommunication around prognosis and goals of care
- Insufficient end-of-life care education for professional providers

Hospice and palliative care offer a patient- and family-oriented approach to care for persons with advanced illness. This care has been shown to improve patient and family satisfaction, reduce pain and distressing symptoms, relieve family burden, and reduce overall medical costs. This experience will introduce you to the essential principles of hospice and palliative care and provide you an opportunity to spend time with dying patients and their families. The rotation will also provide you the opportunity to explore your own end-of-life beliefs and values and process normal human reactions and emotions when talking with and caring for dying patients.

Objectives

Following completion of the experience, participants will demonstrate improved understanding of:

- Core philosophical principles of hospice and palliative care
- The Hospice Medicare Benefit

Participants will have the experiential opportunity to:

- Communicate with terminally ill patients and their families
- Observe approaches to care for patients with advanced illness
- Work with the hospice interdisciplinary team

Logistics

Orientation

Overview: During the orientation, you will receive an overview of hospice and palliative care and the day with a hospice staff member. Participants will complete a pre-test.

Meet at The Denver Hospice/Life Quality Institute (TDH/LQI) at 8 AM for the Introductory Session. TDH's address is 501 S. Cherry Street, Suite 700, Denver, CO 80246, 7th floor and the building name is One Cherry Center

- Following orientation, Susan Anderson will pair you with a preceptor (hospice nurse, chaplain, or social worker). You may be meeting the preceptor at the TDH office or at another location in Metro Denver. Your packet will contain instructions, maps, and contact information.
- Please return to TDH **no later than 3:30 PM** for the debriefing session which will last until 5 PM
- Please wear professional attire, no jeans
- Please wear your nametag throughout the day
- Bring a lunch and bottled water/drink
- If any problems arise during the day, please contact Susan Anderson at 303.398.6326.

Hospice Experience

Overview: This one-day hospice experience will introduce you to hospice care through a community-based clinical experience. You will shadow a hospice nurse, social worker, or chaplain to observe hospice providers interacting with and caring for terminally ill patients and families.

Questions to Consider:

How would you describe "hospice" to a friend, patient, or family member?

What patients might benefit most or least from hospice care at the end of life?

What is the role of the family in hospice care?

How will you talk with a patient about hospice and palliative care, death and dying, or hope?

What is the role of food and fluids at the end of life?

How would you talk with a family concerned that their loved one is "starving to death?"

Describe the benefits and drawbacks, if any, of hospice interdisciplinary care teams (IDTs).

Why does hospice utilize a team approach to care at the end of life?

What is "quality of life" or "suffering" for a terminally ill patient?

What is "hope" for someone who is dying?

Can we help patients and families reframe hope at the end of life? If so, how?

Debriefing

Overview: You will debrief your observations and questions with a facilitator and your classmates. You will complete the post-test and evaluation of the one-day experience and provide any feedback to the facilitator.

Suggestions on Self-Care

While caring for persons with terminal illness can provide great personal satisfaction and meaning, these experiences are often emotionally and psychologically challenging. Learning to manage these emotions – rather than suppressing difficult feelings or avoiding engaging in meaningful relationships – is an important skill. Development of such skills will lead to more effective and compassionate care for your future patients and their families, whether dying or not, and result in your own greater personal satisfaction as a healthcare provider.

Your group debriefing session will provide you with an opportunity to actively “process” the hospice experience. Additional support is immediately available to you through the facilitator and personnel at the The Denver Hospice. Please utilize this support at any time by calling Susan Anderson 303.398.6326, Judy Kadlec-Fuller at 303.398.6259, or Cheryl Siefert at 303.321.2828.