Dealing with Difficult Discussions at End of Life Care

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What is End of Life (EOL) Care?

- Healthcare provided during the last hours, days, or months of a patient’s life

- According to Espinosa et al. (2010), “In the United States, approximately 2.5 million people die each year, with 60% of these deaths occurring in hospitals.”
Terms to Consider in EOL Care

- **Palliative care**—“Any Age or Stage”
- **Hospice care**—“Terminally or Seriously Ill”
- **Advance Directives**—“What I Want”
- **Durable Power of Attorney**—“The Chosen One”
- **DNR**—“Do Not Resuscitate”
Health Policy Related to End of Life Care

- Patient Self-Determination Act of 1991

- Patient Order of Life Sustaining Treatment
  - Louisiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (LaPOST)
Feelings that Arise with EOL Care

- Protect patient from suffering
- Conflict of care
- Moral distress
- Loss and grief
How to deal with EOL care?

- Learn and understand your own personal beliefs about death and dying
- Explore and examine varying cultural customs of death and dying
- Build a support team encompassing fellow nurses and staff
- Include coping techniques such as crying, humor, and talking to others about terminal care
Patient Centered Care at EOL

- Provide peace and quiet
- Provide memories
- Uphold personal human dignity
Importance of Family in EOL Care

- Who is considered family?
- How to build a trusting relationship?
- The Nurse’s Role
Community Nursing in EOL Care

- Early end of life care discussions
- Educational programs
- Multidisciplinary cooperation
Registered nurses need “to find the confidence, competence, courage, and conviction to recognize and seize opportunities that facilitate open, honest, and timely discussions about planning and choice at the end of life, to ensure that dying well is an integral component of living well” (Hickey et al., 2012).
Questions?
Questions to Consider

- What are your own beliefs about death and dying?
- How are these views influenced by culture, heritage, and religion?
- What would you consider to be a ‘good death’?
- What interventions would you want in your end of life care plan? (artificial nutrition, mechanical ventilation, CPR, DNR, antibiotics)
Scenario

As an RN, you are caring for a 92 year old male presenting with acute respiratory failure due to metastatic lung cancer who is placed on mechanical ventilation. Patient’s durable power of attorney of healthcare is his eldest son who believes in continuing all medical interventions to sustain the patient’s current status. However, the patient has two daughters who wish to remove mechanical ventilation. As the primary care nurse for this patient and his family members, what concerns do you need to consider? What types of methods can you, as a nurse, use to help begin end of life discussions with the patient’s family members?
References