

First year student nurses' experience with death and dying of a patient in clinical practice



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Introduction

- Nursing training in South Africa is composed of two components
- Student nurses are expected to do practical work in the clinical area
- Allocation of nurses in clinical area commences from first year
- Clinical nurses are expected to teach these new nurses



Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore experiences of first year student nurses when dealing with death and dying of a patient in order to understand their feelings and emotions they go through.

Objective

- Explore and describe experiences of first year student nurses when dealing with death and dying of patients.

Methodology

- Qualitative method was used
- Population (First year students nurses)
- Data collection (In-depth interviews)
- Data analysis (thematic data analysis)
- **Ethical considerations**
 - ✓ Study approval, informed consent, privacy, protection of identity

Data collection

- How did you experience dealing with death and a dying patient during your clinical allocation?
- *The following were probing questions:*
 - ✓ How many encounters of dealing with death and dying of a patient did you have?
 - ✓ What was the second and subsequent encounters like?

Findings

The following themes were developed from data analysed:

- Lack of knowledge
- Emotional trauma
- Not belonging

Life As A Nursing Student



First Day



Midterm



Finals

Discussions

- Lack of knowledge

- ✓ *“I didn’t know the signs of a person who is gasping or who is dying and I didn’t even know what gasping is. I just relied on rumours that I once heard, that a dead person feels ‘cold’*
- ✓ *“We didn’t even know that the patient has passed away as we just continue to bath him”.*
- ✓ *“I had no knowledge of how to handle a dying patient. Sisters just shut us out when we ask things”.*

Discussion cont...

- Emotional trauma

- ✓ *“The patient was a child. The mother visited and brought some fruits for the child, only to find that the child is no more alive”.*
- ✓ *“I was stressed as I could not cry; I was told that nurses are not supposed to cry”.*
- ✓ *“It was very hard. I could not sleep. I moved out of nurses home so that I can always be with my mother”.*

*My First Heartbreak
As A Student Nurse*



Discussion cont...

- Not belonging

- ✓ *“I feel that I do not belong to this profession. If I do belong, then why is it that two patients - two patients died in my care?”*
- ✓ *“I did not even perform procedure such as resuscitation to save a patient’s life because I did not know such procedure. Had I known this procedure, I would have saved this patient’s life. Now I feel that I do not belong in this profession as I cannot save life”.*
- ✓ *“I actually wanted to quit the course because I felt that I do not belong”*

Recommendations

- First year nurses need to be accompanied by tutors when going to the clinical areas.
- Clinical facilitators needs more training on how to introduce new nurses to the situations.
- Reduction of theory load to make space for practical.
- Change of attitudes of the clinical to make student nurses feel acceptable to the profession.
- Nursing students to have debriefing sessions especially after a traumatic experiences.



**I CAN'T KEEP
Calm**

**I GOT ACCEPTED
Into**

NURSING SCHOOL

**I HAVE NO LIFE,
I'M A STUDENT NURSE.**



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Thank you
for
listening!



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