

Living and Dying in East Africa: Implementing the End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium Curriculum in Tanzania

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Education about palliative care is crucial for oncology nurses, particularly in the developing world, where most patients present with advanced disease and heavy symptom burden. The End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium–International training program was implemented in Tanzania to provide nurses with the knowledge, expertise, and tools to better care for the dying and to educate others. The curriculum was presented to 39 participants over three days, including didactic presentations, small group discussions, and role play. None of the participants had received previous formal palliative care training. The participants rated their impression of the course as excellent. Follow-up at eight months yielded similar findings regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum. International education regarding palliative care for those with cancer requires an understanding of different disease patterns and clinical practices, along with cultural humility and empathy. These experiences are extraordinarily enriching, giving nurses a unique perspective on palliative care that ultimately informs their own practice.

More than 7 million people die from cancer each year (World Health Organization, 2009). Many receive inadequate pain management or symptom control and little attention to psychological, social, and spiritual concerns. The inadequate care is caused, in part, by lack of education of healthcare professionals, limited availability of opioids and other medications, and insufficient resources (Ferrell, Virani, Grant, & Juarez, 2000; McMillan & Weitzner, 2000; Morrison, Wallenstein, Natale, Senzel, & Huang, 2000). The barriers persist to some degree in North America and the developed world, but they can be profound in the developing world (Brennan, Carr, & Cousins, 2007; Sepulveda et al., 2003; Taylor, Gostin, & Pagonis, 2008). The result is a global phenomenon of needless suffering for those with cancer.

Internationalizing End-of-Life Nursing Education

One strategy to address the urgent need is nursing education about palliative care. The End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC), which began in February 2000, initially was funded by a major grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with later funding from the National Cancer Institute, Aetna Foundation, Archstone Foundation, and California Healthcare Foundation. The ELNEC curriculum was developed by experts from the City of Hope in collaboration with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. By early 2009, 58 ELNEC training programs had been held throughout the United States, with almost 6,000 nurses attending from a variety of

At a Glance

- ◆ Many of the more than 7 million people who die from cancer each year receive inadequate pain or symptom control and little attention to psychological, social, and spiritual concerns.
- ◆ The End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium–International curriculum addresses the urgent need for nursing education regarding palliative care.
- ◆ International education regarding palliative care requires an understanding of different disease patterns and clinical practices, along with cultural humility and empathy.

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