

B O O K S

Palliative Care Nursing: Quality Care to the End of Life. Marianne LaPorte Matzo*, Deborah Witt Sherman*, Editors. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2001, 545 pages, \$59.95.



Hardcover



Palliative Care Nursing is a timely contribution to the growing body of nursing literature concerning palliative and end-of-life care. Editors Matzo and Sherman compiled this book to provide “the essential information to achieve

best practices in palliative care nursing.” The book may be used in undergraduate and graduate nursing curricula, and the content also is applicable to practicing nurses and educators. Organized according to the 1998 American Association of Colleges of Nursing competency standards, each chapter of the text builds on one or more of the 15 standards and concludes with a summary table of an “education plan” that addresses the requisite knowledge, attitudes, and skills to achieve specific behavioral outcomes for undergraduate and graduate nurses. Tables include teaching and learning strategies to enable integration of the chapter content into nursing curricula.

The editors organized the text to “emphasize the importance of a holistic perspective and an understanding of the patient and family as individuals with diverse spiritual and cultural needs and expectations.” Consistent with this statement, Matzo and Sherman placed the content related to spiritual, cul-

tural, and social concerns toward the beginning of the text. The more familiar discussion of physical aspects of palliative care is placed at the end of the book because the editors believed that physical interventions emanate from and are linked inextricably to assessment and intervention in the psychological, spiritual, and social domains.

The story of “Candy,” a 42-year-old married mother of two who is diagnosed with stage III ovarian cancer begins and unites the four major sections of the book. That the editors chose to tell the story of a patient whose demographics so closely match those of many practicing nurses is noteworthy—Candy also is a nurse. Matzo and Sherman’s assertion that the nurse caring for seriously ill and dying patients must examine his or her own beliefs, expectations, values, and fears concerning death is mirrored in Candy’s story, one that surely will strike home for many readers and stimulate reflection about living and dying.

Part I includes chapters on spiritually and culturally competent palliative care and holistic integrative therapies. The first chapter places the meaning of illness and suffering into a spiritual and cultural context and includes information about various traditions. The chapter also emphasizes the issue of caregiver strain—for both families and nurses—and provides practical suggestions for caregiver assessment and support, as well as personal reflection and healing. Likewise, the chapter on holistic therapies reviews the application of various noninvasive healing modalities for patients, their families, and nurses themselves.

The four chapters in Part II address death and society, the nurse’s role in interdisciplinary palliative care, ethical issues, and legal considerations. The discussion of death and society effectively sketches the broader social issues concerning end-of-life care, structural barriers to improving care, and the need for

sweeping social change. Although the chapter addressing interdisciplinary care stresses nurses’ pivotal leadership roles, the chapter and its table detailing team roles emphasizes the advanced practice role. An expanded depiction of the undergraduate “primary” unit or the homecare or hospice nurse role on the interdisciplinary team would be useful to undergraduate students and nurses. The chapter about ethics contains a clear and concise overview of ethical theory, including an introduction to the less familiar decisional theory based on caring. As the application of a decision model is specified as an undergraduate outcome, this chapter would be strengthened by demonstrating how nurses can apply the featured decision-making framework to selected ethical problems in palliative care. A chapter on legal issues contains a comprehensive discussion of advanced directives (ADs), with particular attention to noncompletion of ADs and the cultural bias of autonomy assumptions.

Part III contains chapters devoted to communication, caring for families, and loss, suffering, bereavement, and grief. The communication chapter is especially valuable, as it provides both a theoretical basis and concrete examples of how to build and maintain a therapeutic relationship in the presence of sensitive issues and distressing news.

Part IV concludes the text with chapters regarding symptom management, pain management, and perideath nursing care. The symptom management chapter addresses common symptoms and offers a comprehensive table of medications used to treat various symptoms. The pain management chapter is current and concise and includes the use of adjuvant and nonpharmacologic approaches; pain management in special populations (e.g., substance abusers, patients with impaired communication, children), also is discussed.

Palliative Care Nursing is a comprehensive, well-written text that is as appropriate for practicing nurses as it is for undergraduate and graduate nursing students. The tables within and at the end of each chapter complement rather than repeat the text. The editors have paid particular attention to aspects of caring for the dying that have been neglected in nurs-

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Ease of Reference and Usability	Content Level	Book Size
Quick, on-the-spot resource	Basic	Pocket size
Moderate time requirement	Intermediate	Intermediate
In-depth study	Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required	Desk reference

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