Palliative Care Communication in Oncology Nursing

Joy Goldsmith, PhD, Betty Ferrell, PhD, MA, FAAN, FPCN, Elaine Wittenberg-Lyles, PhD, and Sandra L. Ragan, PhD

Oncology nurses consistently exhibit distress when communicating about end-of-life topics with patients and families. Common communication experiences and processes correlate with emotional distress, moral distress, and work-related stress. The National Consensus Project (NCP) for Quality Palliative Care developed clinical practice guidelines to establish quality standards for the practice of palliative care. NCP’s guidelines are expressly intended as an interdisciplinary document and are representative of the inherent interdisciplinary nature of palliative care. Communication’s value to palliative and oncology nursing is unique because those two specialties include a high frequency of challenging interactions for patients, families, and healthcare professionals. The COMFORT communication curriculum, a holistic model for narrative clinical communication in practice developed for use in early palliative care, is posed as a resource for oncology nurses with a series of practice case examples presented against the backdrop of NCP’s eight domains of quality palliative care.

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