

# Evaluating Undergraduate Nursing Students' Knowledge Before and After a Palliative and End-of-Life Care Course

Susan Thrane, PhD, MSN, RN



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF NURSING

## Summary

Basic palliative care knowledge is important for all nurses and nursing students. Undergraduate students' knowledge of palliative and end-of-life care concepts was measured before and after a semester-long elective palliative care course. Students were required to take the anonymous survey but not to participate in the research study.

## Purpose

To determine if undergraduate nursing students increased their knowledge of palliative and end-of-life care concepts after taking a semester-long course when compared to before the course.

## Methods

One group pre-test/post-test design. An online course based on the AACN CARES<sup>1</sup> guidelines was developed to educate undergraduate nursing students on palliative and end of life care.

## Analysis

Descriptive statistics for demographics, overall pre- and post-scores, and individual survey questions were computed. Paired sample t-tests were computed for pre and post overall scores and individual survey questions.

1. American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2016). CARES: Competencies And Recommendations for Educating Undergraduate Nursing Students. Retrieved December 22, 2016, from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/elnec/New-Palliative-Care-Competencies.pdf>

N = 8	N (%)
Sex: Female	7 (87.5%)
Age:	
< 30	1 (12.5%)
≥ 30	7 (87.5%)
BSN program	
Traditional BSN	1 (12.5%)
RN-BSN Completion	7 (87.5%)
Years of experience as an RN	
0-2	3 (37.5%)
3-5	2 (25.0%)
6-8	2 (25.0%)
≥ 9	1 (12.5%)
Have you ever taken a class or workshop about palliative care?	
• No	4 (50%)
• No, but I have read either books or articles about palliative care	3 (37.5%)
• Yes	1 (12.5%)
Are you interested in pursuing a graduate level certificate or minor in palliative care?	Yes: 5 (62.5%)



Sample Question	Pre	Post	p
<b>What is hospice care?</b> (overall mean score)	0.37/1	0.75/1	0.002*
• Hospice is only for people over 65 years of age	0	0	
• Hospice helps people live as well as possible	2 (25%)	7 (87.5%)	
• You have to live at home to get hospice	0	1 (12.5%)	
• Hospice is for people with 6 months or less to live	6 (75%)	8 (100%)	
• Hospice is a Medicare benefit	1 (12.5%)	3 (37.5%)	
<b>What makes palliative care different from hospice care?</b>			
• Answer: With palliative care, you can still get treatment aimed at a cure	6 (75%)	8 (100%)	0.170
<b>What causes death rattle?</b>			
• Answer: Noisy breathing that is the result of excess fluid in the upper respiratory tract	7 (87.5%)	8 (100%)	0.351
<b>When is the best time to discuss sexuality with a person receiving palliative care?</b>			
• Answer: During the first meeting and anytime thereafter	0 (0%)	6 (75%)	0.003*
<b>LGBTQ individuals often feel stigmatized in healthcare situations</b> (Answer: True)	8 (100%)	8 (100%)	1.00
<b>When should perinatal palliative care be started?</b>			
• Answer: Soon after a life-limiting or lethal diagnosis	6 (75%)	8 (100%)	0.170
<b>How do prisons manage hospice care?</b>			
• Answer: Inmates serve as volunteers	4 (50%)	8 (100%)	0.033*
<b>What is the difference between grief and bereavement?</b>			
• Answer: Grief is a feeling of deep sorrow or anguish while bereavement is a period of mourning after the death of a loved one	5 (62.5%)	7 (87.5%)	0.170

\*p < 0.05

	Total Mean Score	p
Pre-test	33.07	0.057
Post-test	36.17	



## Course Modules

- Palliative and Hospice Care
- Symptoms
- End of Life Experiences and Self-Care
- Psychological, Cultural, and Spiritual Diversity in End-of-Life Care
- Effective Communication
- Ethical Considerations and Advance Care Planning
- Special Topics
  - Sexuality and LGBTQ
  - Pediatric and Perinatal
  - Homeless and Prisoners
- Grief & Bereavement
- The End of Life