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Deathbed Visions in Terminally Ill Patients and the Peaceful Death: An Integrated Research Review

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In the weeks, days and minutes leading to death, as many as 62-87 % of terminally ill patients experience a phenomena known as deathbed visions (DBVs) (Dos Santos, et al, 2017). In the terminally ill patient, DBVs can be sightings of apparitions such as deceased family members and religious figures (Ethier, 2005). Evidence suggests that DBVs provide a sense of comfort to the dying as well as acceptance of death among patients and family members (Fenwick et al., 2009). Additionally, research proposes that nurses have little training and knowledge in dealing with DBVs (Dos Santos, et al, 2017). This review aims to answer questions pertaining to nurses involvement in end-of-life care and the adequacy of supportive attention toward terminally ill patients experiencing DBVs. The evaluation was fashioned using the methodology of Integrated Research Reviews as outlined by Whitemore and Knafle (2005). A search of articles was completed using five of the major literature databases: Cochran Library, CINAHL, Medline, PubMed, and Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition. Bibliographic mining was also utilized. Key words used in searching were "deathbed phenomena" or "deathbed visions" or "end of life" and "hallucinations" and "end of life dreams/visions". Search criteria was limited to "full free text articles". The years searched in all databases fell between 2005-2017. Because nursing research of DBVs is relatively new, studies from earlier years were included. A total of seventy-eight articles were located, including bibliographic mining. All articles were evaluated for credibility using the appraisal checklists and the EBR tool created by Long and Ganaway (Brown, 2017; 2015). Within the seventy-eight articles located, thirty-one were duplicates; thirteen were considered to be "high quality" and appropriate to use in this review. Of these thirteen articles, there were no Level 1, one Level 2, two Level 3, four Level 4, three Level 5, two Level 6, and one Level 7. This literature review has resulted in thought-provoking recommendations. Thematic throughout the integrative research review was the lack of nursing education concerning DBVs. The knowledge gap inherently appears to create barriers in supportive nursing care of the dying patient (Broadhurst & Harrington, 2016).

Title:

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Keywords:

Deathbed Visions, End of life care and Terminally Ill Patients

References:

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Abstract Summary:

In dying patients, Deathbed Visions (DBVs) can be sightings of apparitions such as deceased family members and religious figures (Ethier, 2005). Evidence suggests that DBVs provide a sense of comfort to the dying as well as acceptance of death among patients and family members (Fenwick et al., 2009).

Content Outline:

1. Deathbed Visions (DBVs) in terminally ill patients: Background and significance
 1. Apparitions
 2. Transcendence
 3. Purpose of DBVs
 4. DBVs mistaken for hallucinations
2. Nursing care provided to patients experiencing DBVs
 1. Are current care practices adequate and supportive?
3. Differences between DBVs and hallucinations
 1. Simple guide for nurses

4. Common themes of DBVs
 1. Support
 2. Comfort
 3. Companionship
 4. Reunion
 5. Prognosis
 6. Choice and Control
5. Methodology of research conducted
 1. Integrative Research Review
 2. Searched databases
 3. Inclusion/Exclusion criteria
6. Prisma Flow diagram
 1. Results
7. Literature Synthesis
8. Clinical Implications
9. Conclusion

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