
Workshop Improves Nurses' Palliative Communication Skills



A workshop developed at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) has been effective in improving palliative care communication skills of critical care nurses. Specifically, workshop participants reported improvements to skill and confidence levels for engaging in discussions of prognosis and goals of care with families and physicians, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Critical Care (AJCC)*.

Also, based on qualitative analysis, the workshop helped empower nurses and created a culture of support in the intensive care unit (ICU).

"Communication is an essential part of quality care within all areas of healthcare and especially in the ICU. The bedside nurse provides not only physical care to their patient, but also informational and emotional support of patient, family and colleagues," says lead author Wendy Anderson, MD, MS, an associate professor in the Division of Hospital Medicine and Palliative Care Program and the Department of Physiological Nursing at UCSF.

"This evidence-based educational workshop provides tools nurses need to be a respected part of an interdisciplinary team helping families navigate palliative care discussions and decisions," Dr. Anderson continues.

The eight-hour communication skills workshop was designed by an interdisciplinary working group within the ICU-Palliative Care Committee, a special-interest group focused on improving palliative care in the ICU at UCSF Medical Center.

Each workshop began with a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of bedside nurses related to the patient and family and within the healthcare team. Participants practised skills during facilitated role-plays. The workshop concluded with an interactive session led by the palliative care chaplain about the daily stressors that impact ICU bedside nurses. The discussion focused on compassion fatigue, burnout and personal practices of self-care to combat these effects.

Participants completed surveys before, immediately after, and three months after their workshop, rating their confidence and skill in performing key tasks. Participating nurses reported greater skill and confidence, including assessing family understanding of prognosis and goals of care, addressing family emotional needs and contributing to family meetings. Increases were sustained three months following the workshop.

Source: [American Association of Critical-Care Nurses](#)

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