

Vignette #7: 27.21–34.33

Hospice Is Hard to Accept (7 min.)



Objective

By the end of this vignette, viewers will be able to: discuss common misperceptions about hospice care; reflect upon the difficulties that may arise when a patient and her/his significant other have different views about end-of-life care decisions.

Summary

Gilbert Oakley, RN, a visiting hospice nurse in New York, is conducting a home hospice visit to a patient and his wife. He discusses his role as a hospice nurse, and he sits with the couple and interviews them about their future health care wishes.

Patients Highlighted

Bert Cohen, 95-year-old living at home with his wife, and receiving hospice services. Their adult children, though very supportive, are not there according to Mrs. Cohen.

Discussion Point 1

There are many varied fields within nursing, including hospice and palliative care. Reflect on Gilbert the nurse's comments about being a hospice nurse. He talks about the hospice team as being "granola, touchy-feely, and really nice." He mentions the team singing and burning incense.

Discussion Question 1

How do Gilbert's reflections about hospice and the care team fit with your vision of what hospice means?

Further Discussion/Points as Needed to Prompt Audience Interaction

Do you think that people in general, and/or nurses may have preconceived ideas, generalizations, expectations, or fears about working or being cared for in a hospice/palliative care setting? If so, give examples.

Discussion Point 2

Mr. Cohen and his wife have very different views about him dying at home. While he wishes to continue to live "a fairly normal life" he is expressing a desire to avoid hospitalization, and to die at home when the time comes. However, Mrs. Cohen talks about the need to go to the hospital "if it makes you better."

Discussion Question 2

How does Gilbert deal with the conflicting opinions between Mr. and Mrs. Cohen regarding hospitalization versus dying at home?

Further Discussion/Points as Needed to Prompt Audience Interaction

Gilbert has an open discussion with the couple, and while he respectfully acknowledges Mrs. Cohen, he clearly supports Mr. Cohen's wishes. How do the wishes of Mrs. Cohen play a role here? Should they play a role in whether her husband stays at home or whether he gets admitted to the hospital?

Discussion Question 3

Mrs. Cohen says, "From what he (the RN) tells me, I don't want to think about the future." Regarding hospitalization, she says, "If something important needs to be done, it should be done." What factors play into Mrs. Cohen's thoughts on her spouse's potential hospitalization versus his staying at home?

Further Discussion/Points as Needed to Prompt Audience Interaction

Do you think that Mrs. Cohen fears her ability to care for Mr. Cohen at home if he deteriorates? (She has stated her children are supportive but are "not here." Or do you think that she feels that the hospital can "help him more?" Is she being unrealistic, or is she trying to preserve his health, or perhaps her own, by wishing to hospitalize him?

Suggested Applicability to Nursing Courses and/or to Care Settings

Courses: Palliative/Hospice Care; Geriatric Nursing; Nursing Roles; Home Health/Community Nursing; Mental Health Nursing; Medical/Surgical Nursing; and any course focused on communication, ethical dilemmas, and/or family systems. **Care Settings:** Orientation and/or in-service programs for health care providers in primary, acute, long term, hospice/palliative care, and/or home care settings.

Suggested Congruence with ELNEC Modules

Palliative Nursing Care; Pain Management; Symptom Management; Ethical Issues in Palliative Care Nursing; Cultural/Spiritual Considerations in End-of-Life Care; Communication; Loss, Grief, Bereavement.

Related Vignettes

#9: Sympathy Versus Empathy.