



Dahlkemper

# Chapter 10

## End-of-Life Issues

# Caring for Older Adults Holistically

SEVENTH EDITION



# Introduction: End-of-Life Issues

- People want a “good death.”
- Nurses have an essential role in providing end-of-life (EOL) care.
- Nurses need to explain options and provide referrals and resources to older adults and their families.



# Mystery of Death

- Nurses need to be prepared to be a positive influence for appropriate EOL issues.
  - Be educated in EOL issues.
  - Provide older adults with high quality of life and a good death.
  - Be skilled at teamwork with other caring professionals, families, and the dying person.



# Grief

- Grief is the normal reaction to a catastrophic loss.
- Kübler-Ross defined the stages of grief.
- Stages of grief describe normal human reactions to death.
- Stages include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.
- A person can move from one stage to another and then up or down the stages.



# Grief (continued\_1)



- Denial

- The person is unable to accept the loss.
- They may show signs of shock, praying that it is not true; may seem “dazed.”

- Anger

- Demonstrates awareness of loss and its consequences
- Person needs be able to vent anger in a safe environment.

# Grief (continued\_2)



- **Bargaining**

- Making bargains with God or a supernatural power
- The thinking is that if one trades something of value, then the person will get better.
- The family needs to be supportive during this stage.

# Grief (continued\_3)



- Depression
  - The individual does not accept the loss but accepts the fact that nothing can change it.
  - Assess for suicidal thinking.
- Acceptance
  - The person accepts death and feels a sense of relief.
  - They are able to go on with life's activities.

# Qualities for a Nurse Providing End-of-Life Care



- Tolerance and empathy
- Sense of humor
- Communication
- Good listening skills

# Qualities for a Nurse Providing End-of-Life Care (continued)



- Actions that demonstrate a lack of attentiveness
- Qualities to develop before caring for a person who is dying

# Cultural Accountability

- Be familiar with the cultural diversities of the older adults in your care.
- Cultural needs should be addressed immediately on admission.



# End-of-Life Decisions

- Be aware of the decisions a person has made about his or her current and future medical care.
- Help protect the patient's right to make his or her own health-care choices.
- Advance directives
  - Written documents that outline patient's wishes about life-sustaining treatments



# End-of-Life Decisions (continued)



- Palliative care
  - Manages symptoms
  - Goal is to improve the quality of life.
- Hospice
- Escalation of palliative care as the patient nears death

# Advance Directives

- Written documents that outline patient's wishes about life-sustaining treatments
- Durable power of attorney
  - Used in cases in which an individual is incompetent
  - Forms need to come from a qualified attorney to ensure their legality in the state where the older adult resides.



# Advance Directives (continued)



- **Living will**
  - Allows individuals to share their opinions and wishes regarding their death
- **Do not resuscitate**
  - Role and use of this type of order

# Imminent Signs of Death

- Bodily functions slow
- Signs and symptoms
  - Withdrawal
  - Reduced food and fluid intake
  - Confusion/agitation
  - Change in breathing pattern
  - Noisy respirations
  - Incontinence
  - Change in skin temperature and color



# Imminent Signs of Death (continued)

- Signs and symptoms (continued)
  - Loss of hearing
  - Terminal restlessness
- Communication needs of the dying patient
- Role of the nurse during the dying process

