

End-of-Life Conversations: Teaching Undergraduate Nursing Students About Difficult Conversations Through Gamified Learning

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Abstract

Background/Introduction

End of life (EOL) competencies have become increasingly recognized as a critical aspect of the necessary education for registered nurses, yet few models exist that enable nursing students to practice the interpersonal communication skills necessary for working effectively and compassionately with EOL patients.

Purpose

To assess how the experience of an interactive conversation activity, called the Hello Game, influences nursing students engagement in EOL conversations.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

A qualitative descriptive design using a researcher designed scale and open-ended questions were sent to students who participated in the Hello Game as part of an undergraduate nursing class at a large R1 university in the mid-Atlantic region six weeks following the conclusion of the course. All responses were reviewed independently by two researchers using a descriptive analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic questions and Likert style questions. A content analysis was conducted on the open-ended questions.

Results

Students (n=13) were fourth-year students (69%) between the ages of 18-24 (69%) with the majority of students (92%) having experienced the death of a loved one. Most students (59%) felt that the Hello Game was an effective teaching strategy for learning to engage in difficulty conversations and 46% of students felt comfortable working with others to make EOL decisions. Qualitative responses support the findings that the Hello Game is an effective teaching tool to help undergraduate nursing students' ability to retain skills in communication, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility related to EOL discussions.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include a small sample size.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

The findings from this study indicate that even a two-hour gamified learning strategy can facilitate improved EOL communication skills in nursing students. It is critically important that nurses engage in social responsibility and have the ethical reasoning to engage persons in these conversations so that their wishes may be respected at the EOL.

Biography

Michael M. Evans, PhD, MEd, RN, ACNS, CMSRN, CNE is the Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Nursing Education and a Teaching Professor of Nursing at Penn State University, Ross and Carol College of Nursing, where he is responsible for teaching in the Baccalaureate, RN to BSN and graduate programs. As Assistant Dean, he helps to oversee undergraduate nursing programs at 10 campus locations. Dr. Evans is board certified in medical surgical nursing, end of life care, and nursing education.

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