



Comfort

Comfort Goals

Overview

Health professionals provide active, desirable, and important comfort care to dying people and their families. In order to provide quality comfort care, health professionals elicit, document, display, and assist in implementation of the patient's wishes for end of life care. This comfort care service is not assisted suicide or euthanasia.

The health professional is most effective in providing comfort care to the dying when the professional recognizes his or her own attitudes, feelings, and expectations about comfort. As well the health professional must recognize and implement care respecting the individual, cultural, and spiritual diversity that exists in the beliefs and customs of dying people and their families. Such care demonstrates value for the patient's views while implementing his or her wishes for end-of-life care. Such comfort care also assists the patient and family to cope with the suffering, grief and loss at the end of life.

Health professionals enact several roles as they provide comfort care. Coaching the patient and family to cope with crises is an important role for nurses. When symptoms are not well controlled, crisis often occurs and must be managed within the context of family dynamics. Patient-centered and family-centered care in which the health professional makes an implicit promise to provide active comfort-care and implements care on that promise are important cornerstones for effective end-of-life care.