



Comfort

Symptoms Other Than Pain

Overview

Physical symptoms other than pain can be distressing to the patient and family facing the end-of-life transition. Understanding the nature of the symptoms most frequently experienced by dying people and how to assess and treat them is critical for effective end-of-life care. The dying process is variable depending on individual and family characteristics but there are predictable physical, physiologic and emotional changes that occur during the final days and hours of life. During this important phase of end-of-life care, the nurse serves as a consultant, collaborator, coach or guide to assist the patient to achieve symptom relief. Also the nurse helps the patient and family to prepare for the approaching death. Knowing what to expect is vital for the nurse to meet patient and family needs before, at and after the death. Nurses provide anticipatory guidance and expert symptom management in order to promote physical and psychological comfort for the dying person and for his/her family members.