University of Maryland School of Nursing
Doctor of Nursing Practice Program

Announcement of Capstone Presentation

Candidate: Catherine M. Haut

Date, Time, Place: July 1, 2010 10:00am to 12:00pm
UMB School of Nursing, Room 732

Capstone Project Title: Implementation of a Program to Improve Inpatient and PICU Nurses’ Knowledge of and Attitudes Toward Palliative Care

Capstone Project Abstract: (You must type your abstract on this form in the space provided)

Background: Children are not supposed to die and when they do, the emotional effects for the living are pervasive. Despite the fact that 53,000 children die each year with the majority occurring in the hospital setting, nurses working in the PICU and inpatient pediatric units responsible for the care of these children have limited expertise and varying comfort levels regarding palliative and end of life care. Their nursing abilities focus on supporting survival, healing and curing, yet they are the sole care providers during the child’s dying days and hours. National initiatives and incentives support and advocate for palliative and end of life care for children, but studies on the topic of nurses’ perceptions, knowledge and attitudes have demonstrated that nurses are unprepared for this task.

Purpose: The objective of this capstone project was to answer the question: Does implementation of a formal educational program, improve pediatric and PICU nurses’ knowledge and attitudes regarding palliative care concepts and management of children and their families experiencing life limiting conditions?

Design: A one-group pretest, post test, pre-experimental design was used to compare knowledge and attitude scores of pediatric nurses before and after an online educational program on pediatric palliative care.

Sample: The convenience sample included 25 nurses working in the PICU and pediatric inpatient unit of a large, local, community hospital.

Data Sources: PICU and inpatient pediatric nurses volunteered to complete a survey instrument prior to participating in an online educational program in pediatric palliative care followed by answering the same survey questions addressing knowledge and attitudes after the program.

Results: One-tailed, paired t-tests were used to test the differences in the mean scores of attitude and knowledge obtained before and after the educational intervention. The mean score for knowledge following the educational program was significantly higher than the pretest score ($M = .42, SD = .85, N = 25$) indicating evidence that the educational program was effective ($t(24) = 2.48, p = .021$). Mean score for attitude following the educational program was also significantly higher than the pretest score ($M = .96, SD = .75, N = 25$) indicating effectiveness of the educational program ($t(24) = 6.38, p = .001$).

Conclusions/Implications: Despite the small number of participants, this study successfully raised the awareness of the need for education and support for nurses in pediatric palliative care. Implications of the study focus most appropriately on improving end of life care for dying children and their families.

Capstone Chair (name & title): Michele Michael, PhD, CRNP
Capstone Advisory Committee Members (names & titles):
  - Member: Dawn Mueller, PhD, CRNP
  - Member: Karen Soeken, PhD
  - Member: Patricia Moloney-Harmon, MSN, CCNS, FAAN

The Open Presentation is open to the university community and invitees of the candidate. Any member of the Graduate Faculty may observe the capstone presentation. Only committee members may vote.

Updated: March 31, 2008