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The experience of nurses who work for children with palliative care needs: A mixed method systematic review

Maha M Atout

Philadelphia University, Jordan

The importance of palliative care education for nurses has been recognized worldwide. Although several studies have focused on nursing education in end-of-life care for adult patients, less attention has been devoted to education in end-of-life issues for children and young people under the age of 18 years. The aim of this review was to explore the experiences of nurses working for children with palliative care needs and to identify any related educational needs for the nurses. A mixed-method systematic review was undertaken. The studies included in the review were limited to those that investigated the experiences of nurses working for children with palliative care needs and the nurses' educational needs (if any). The CINAHL, Cochrane, PubMed, OVID, Social Care Online, Web of Science, Scopus, and ProQuest electronic databases were searched for such studies that were performed between 2000 and 2015. 20 studies were found, which had been conducted in a variety of countries: Uganda, Ireland, Iran, USA, UK, Taiwan, Australia, Greece, and China. The review revealed that working for children with palliative care needs is emotionally difficult for nurses, especially when they try to manage the transition of pediatric patients from curative to palliative care. Staffing levels and time constraints are major obstacles in pediatric palliative care. A focus on invasive treatments and technologies, despite feeling that they will not improve the patients' health status, intensifies feelings of guilt and helplessness for nurses. This review concludes that nursing education in pediatric palliative care is critically important-especially education in communicating with children with palliative care needs and their families. Further studies are required to investigate nurses' experiences of caring for children with non-malignant life-threatening and life-limiting illnesses.

m.atout@philadelphia.edu.jo

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