

THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE END OF LIFE CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CANCER - BY KADIJA AHMED

Introduction:

This presentation will examine the significance of providing an effective end of life care for children and young people with cancer. The aim will use specific interventions that implement into establishing efficient end of life care. According to Aidoo & Rajapaske (2018), end of life care is significant for children and young people with cancer. It allows the child to manage their illness by providing them with interventions such as the management of pain symptoms, offering emotional support for not only them but their family, fostering and endorsing dignity and respect as well as allowing the child to make choices and take control in their care.

Aims & Rationales

- Using specific interventions implemented into end-of-life care for children with cancer.
- Focusing on minimising the child's physical and emotional factors such as; pain management throughout this process.
- Providing effective methods to improve quality of life for young people ensuring that their needs are respected and met.

Role of the nurse and the wider Multidisciplinary Team (MDT):

Nurses' professional responsibilities to deliver end of life care is instilled in the core of nursing practice. Palliative care from a nursing perspective underlines in supporting the holistic needs of patients and their families which includes in the assessment and treatment of their physical, emotional and spiritual health. Regarding symptom management this can help improve the child's quality of life, It is significant to individualise symptom management for each child based on their unique needs, including the aftermath of the child's passing. Furthermore, communication can facilitate trust, using age appropriate and sensitive communication techniques to address any language barriers that may exist is necessary for effective communication (Hagan et al., 2018). Hagan et al., (2018) also suggests that nurses are a key component in a child's care. For example, by advocating for the child's wishes, helping bridge communication gaps between the healthcare team and families. Which in turn allows families to make thorough informed decisions about their child's care.

Play Specialists are members of the MDT that are useful in supporting a child through their end-of-life care. They create a safe environment encouraging children to be themselves, reducing anxiety and stress by using play and creative activities as a form of communication, (Boucher et al., 2014).

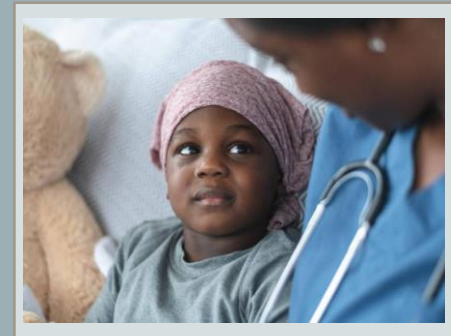
Background:

Pain and symptom management is a form of end-of-life intervention provided to children and young people with cancer. It can ease physical pain and discomfort that the child may feel. It can also benefit the reduction of symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, allowing the child to feel more comfortable as well as improving their quality of life. Nurses play a crucial role in delivering adequate care when relating to pain and symptom management (Sinha et al., 2022). They assess and monitor the child's pain symptoms and determine the appropriate treatment plan. They can aid in the reduction of pain by administering medication, like pain relievers, that improve the quality of care. Nurses also educate the child and the family by providing techniques and strategies to overcome potential side effects to medication. In addition to this it would be imperative for the child's values and morals to be advocated for regardless of the involvement of families as stated by Winger et al (2020).

Emotional support is another form of end-of-life care intervention provided for children and young people. It allows children to be cared for in an efficient and effective manner; (Lockwood & Humphrey, 2018). End of life care for children and young people is necessary as it provides support and comfort to families who are in need. This is because it enables families to come to terms with a diagnosis and end of care treatment. Emotional support is a key component which is significant as it ensures that the child's and families needs are being met, in turn also enabling families navigate through this difficult time with dignity and comfort, (Lockwood & Humphrey, 2018).

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Key Points:

- Enable the child to have a positive quality of life and their family during this process.
- It is important to be sympathetic and understanding throughout this child's prognosis since very important decisions will be made about the child's health (Winger et al 2020).
- The child involved should be able to access resources and services that can help address their emotional and physical needs, as well as supporting families with counselling and bereavement support (Lichtenthal et al., 2015)

Benefits:

- Emotional support – reducing anxiety and fear.
- Preservation of dignity by providing personalised care meeting the child's needs, (Lewandowska, 2022).
- Nurses ensure that there is an advance care planning regarding the child resulting in positive outcomes, (Hagan et al., 2018).
- Advocating for the child's values and morals is imperative regardless of views of families, (Hagan et al., 2018).
- Importance of improved communication amongst children and young people, which results in their wishes being respected (Keeley, 2017)

Challenges:

- Its important to take into consideration factors such as: emotional and psychological strain on children and families, as well as treatment and the repercussions which can occur within a child's treatment (Hanna et al., 2019)
- It is important to understand that there may be differences in religious and cultural views between professionals and patients, (Wiener et al., 2012).
- Limited availability of palliative care services can result in some delays – In essence, the child should be supported and have a stable foundation in a hospital setting during this time.