

**Perspectives of Nursing Students towards Taking Care of Death and Dying Patients and their Families: A Qualitative Study**

**Bandara M. G. D. N.<sup>1</sup> ✉, Rathnayake S.<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract**

Nurses face different challenges and difficulties when caring for dying patients, and it has an impact on both the work environment and the outside environment of nurses. Hence, they need special preparation for caring for dying patients. Nursing students need to be prepared with adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to provide quality care for dying patients and their families as the future nursing workforce. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of nursing students at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, in terms of caring for dying patients and their families during their clinical placement. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to describe and interpret the understanding and shared meanings nursing students had in caring for death and dying patients and their families. A purposive sample of undergraduate nursing students participated in an in-depth semi-structured interview. Colaizzi's seven steps method was used in thematic analysis. Fourteen nursing students were included in the study based on the principles of data saturation. Four themes emerged: (a) Learning death and dying care is challenging. (b) Motivation for learning and care. (c) Need for developing knowledge and skills concerning death and dying care. (d) Need for support and mentoring for nursing students. Nursing students face many challenges, including various negative physical and psychological influences, when caring for dying patients and their families during their first clinical placement. The inadequate knowledge, skills, and experiences were identified. Continuous mentoring and supporting are essential for nursing students to learn the role of the nurses in death and dying care. This study suggests the need for addressing the learning needs of students from the beginning of their degree programme. Modification of the curriculum is essential. The establishment of clinical mentorship is beneficial to provide support for students to learn required skills and attitudes and cope with negative experiences related to death and dying care.

**Keywords:** *Death, dying, experiences, nursing students*

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Nursing, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka  
✉ Corresponding author: damithnissanka995@gmail.com