

Response to “Nursing Care at the Time of Death: A Bathing and Honoring Practice”

I am a nurse in a bone marrow transplantation unit at the University of Florida Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville. We are a high-risk center in the sense that we care for transplant patients who have been denied at other centers. Our patients are very sick with resistant disease and often with multiple comorbidities as well. These sad facts translate into long, torturous, brave battles that end in death. The nursing staff, patients, and families become very close over many months of fighting together. We witness waves of death of these people we have grown to love. The staff has struggled with sadness and an inability to process so much grief.

I came across the article by Rodgers, Calmes, and Grotts (2016) as our unit was experiencing a particularly difficult wave of loss. Many beloved patients lost their fights at

the same time that one of our own nurses, who was cared for on our unit, also succumbed to cancer. This nurse was a member of our RN-instituted palliative care council. Respect for the body at death was her particular passion. Everything came together when I read this study.

We initiated the bathing ritual in Karen’s honor. We have now performed the bath and prayer for three different families. Each experience has been unique and beautiful and has granted immense respect to the loved one and brought solace and closure for the families, as well as the nursing staff. I cannot express enough gratitude for your immense gift of care. We continue

to share the bath ritual with other units that are also struggling with the grief of patient loss. I wanted you to know what a difference you have made to our nurses and patients. I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to you all.

Reference

Rodgers, D., Calmes, B., & Grotts, J. (2016). Nursing care at the time of death: A bathing and honoring practice. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 43, 363–371. doi:10.1188/16.ONF.363-371

Lauren Reveri, RN, BSN, OCN®
RN

*University of Florida Health Shands
Hospital
Gainesville, FL*

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