











“Improving Palliative Care: Insights from Patient and Nurse Perspectives on Care, Environment, and Support”

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Palliative care is a specialized area of healthcare focused on alleviating symptoms and improving the quality of life for patients with serious, life-threatening illnesses. This study explores the experiences of patients and nurses in a palliative care clinic, with the aim of identifying key factors influencing care quality and nurse satisfaction, such as the clinic environment, nurse-patient interactions, emotional stressors, and work conditions.

Methods

A qualitative design using thematic analysis was employed to examine feedback from 15 patients and 15 nurses working in a palliative care setting. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather insights into the participants' experiences, which were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-step process for thematic analysis.

Results

Thematic analysis revealed several key themes: (1) Clinic Environment and Accessibility, with mixed feedback on the remote location's impact on family visits; (2) Nurse-Patient Interaction, highlighting concerns about nurse etiquette but affirming professional competence; (3) Work Stress and Emotional Demands on Nurses, including stress from patient non-compliance and emotional resilience; (4) Nurse Motivation and Career Satisfaction, where nurses expressed pride in their work despite the emotional challenges; (5) Recommendations for Improving Work Conditions, including calls for better compensation and support; and (6) Nurse-Patient Relationship and Care Quality, emphasizing the importance of empathy in improving patient outcomes.

Conclusion

The findings underscore the importance of addressing both environmental factors and interpersonal dynamics to enhance the quality of palliative care. Key recommendations include improving nurse training in communication, offering better emotional and financial support for staff, and fostering strong nurse-patient relationships. These strategies are crucial for improving both the care experience for patients and job satisfaction for nurses in palliative care settings.

Keywords

palliative care, thematic analysis, nurse-patient interaction, work stress, emotional resilience, compensation, clinic environment, nurse satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Palliative care has emerged as a cornerstone of modern healthcare, especially in the context of chronic and terminal illnesses. It focuses not on curing diseases but on providing relief from symptoms, improving quality of life, and addressing the psychological, social,

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and spiritual needs of patients facing serious health challenges (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). With an increasing global emphasis on enhancing end-of-life care, palliative care has evolved into a holistic model, acknowledging the need for compassionate care that goes beyond physical treatment to encompass the emotional and existential experiences of both patients and their families¹. As such, improving palliative care is not just a medical or clinical challenge, but one that requires careful consideration of the diverse needs of patients, the working conditions of healthcare professionals, and the environments in which care is delivered².

The importance of examining palliative care from both patient and nurse perspectives lies in the understanding that the quality of care provided is not determined solely by clinical expertise but is deeply influenced by the relational dynamics between patients and their care providers, as well as the broader institutional environment in which care occurs. Patients receiving palliative care often face a range of emotional and psychological challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and existential distress, which can be exacerbated by the physical symptoms of their illness³. How patients experience these challenges is, in part, shaped by their interactions with healthcare providers, particularly nurses, who are at the forefront of delivering palliative care⁴. The emotional labor involved in caring for terminally ill patients, coupled with the often physically demanding nature of the work, places significant stress on nurses, affecting not only their emotional well-being but also their job satisfaction and the quality of care they provide⁵.

Beyond the interpersonal dynamics between patients and nurses, the clinic environment itself plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences of both patients and healthcare professionals. Research has shown that factors such as the physical environment, accessibility, and institutional support can significantly impact both patient satisfaction and the mental health of healthcare workers⁶. The relocation of a clinic or healthcare facility, for example, may increase accessibility issues for family members or hinder patient visits, while a supportive and empathetic work environment can reduce nurse burnout and foster better patient outcomes⁷. Furthermore, nurses themselves face various workplace challenges, from

the emotional burden of providing care to terminally ill patients to the physical demands of the job, which can contribute to stress and burnout⁸. Therefore, improving palliative care must consider both the immediate clinical environment and the broader institutional frameworks that support healthcare workers.

This study aims to explore how the combined insights from patient feedback and nurse experiences can illuminate key areas for improvement in palliative care, specifically focusing on care quality, nurse-patient relationships, stress and emotional demands on nurses, and work conditions. Understanding how these factors intersect will help to identify strategies for enhancing the care experience for patients, improving the emotional resilience of nurses, and optimizing work environments that promote both physical and emotional well-being. Furthermore, addressing these issues is not only an ethical obligation but also a practical one—creating a work culture that supports both nurses and patients can reduce burnout, increase job satisfaction, and ultimately improve the quality of care provided⁹.

The aim of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in palliative care from both patient and nurse perspectives. By examining clinic accessibility, emotional and psychological support, nurse training and development, and workplace support, the study seeks to generate actionable insights that could inform healthcare policy, improve training and support systems for nurses, and refine care practices for patients in palliative care settings.

This introduction sets the stage for a deep exploration of the interrelationship between patient care experiences, nurse well-being, and the environment in which palliative care takes place, acknowledging the need for systemic improvements that can address both the emotional and practical challenges faced by patients and healthcare workers alike.

Palliative care is a specialized field of healthcare that focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and suffering associated with serious illnesses, particularly when curative treatments are no longer effective. It aims to improve the quality of life for patients facing life-threatening conditions through compassionate care that addresses their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

The provision of high-quality palliative care depends on several factors, including the environment in which care is delivered, the communication between nurses and patients, the emotional resilience of healthcare providers, and the organizational support provided to nursing staff ^{10,11}.

In the context of palliative care, the feedback from both patients and healthcare providers—especially nurses—plays a vital role in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the care provided. Patient experiences and their perspectives on the care they receive can provide valuable insights into the areas of care that require improvement. Similarly, the experiences of nurses, who are often the primary caregivers in palliative care settings, offer a unique view of the challenges and rewards associated with providing compassionate end-of-life care ¹².

Thematic analysis is an effective method for exploring qualitative data and identifying recurring patterns or themes within responses. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of both patients and nurses. By analyzing the feedback from these two key groups, this thematic analysis aims to provide insights into the clinical environment, nurse-patient interactions, emotional and physical stressors, and suggestions for improving care practices in palliative settings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thematic analysis is to explore the perspectives of both patients and nurses involved in palliative care, with a focus on the challenges and benefits they encounter. The study seeks to identify common themes that can inform the improvement of patient care, nurse support, and overall healthcare practices in palliative care settings. Specifically, this analysis will address:

1. The impact of clinic environment and accessibility on patient care and satisfaction.
2. The nature of nurse-patient interactions, focusing on professionalism, communication, and patient satisfaction.
3. The emotional and physical stress experienced by nurses, and its impact on job satisfaction.
4. Recommendations from patients and nurses

for improving work conditions, nurse-patient relationships, and quality of care.

METHODS

Study Design

This study employed a qualitative design using thematic analysis to examine the feedback from patients and nurses in a palliative care clinic. Thematic analysis is particularly well-suited for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data, offering a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences ¹³.

Participants

The study included two groups of participants: patients receiving care in the palliative care clinic and nurses providing care in the same setting. Interviews were conducted with 15 patients and 15 nurses, providing a diverse range of insights from both perspectives. Patient participants were selected based on their involvement in the palliative care program and their ability to provide feedback on their experiences. Nurse participants were chosen based on their roles in the clinic, with a focus on those providing direct patient care.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both patients and nurses to gather qualitative data. Patients were asked about their experiences with the clinic's environment, the care they received, their interactions with nurses, and their overall satisfaction with the care provided. Nurses were interviewed about their professional experiences, the emotional demands of their role, their interactions with patients, and the support they received from the clinic's administration.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was performed using the six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which includes ¹¹:

1. Familiarization with the data: Transcripts of the interviews were read multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the content.
2. Generating initial codes: Initial codes were created to identify features of the data that were of interest.
3. Searching for themes: Codes were examined for patterns and grouped into potential themes.

4. Reviewing themes: Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data.
5. Defining and naming themes: Each theme was clearly defined, and the names were chosen to reflect their underlying meaning.
6. Producing the report: The final report was written to present the themes and support them with representative quotes from the data.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing participants the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to the start of the study.

RESULTS

Themes Identified in the Data

1. Clinic Environment and Accessibility

Theme: Location and Accessibility Challenges

Sub-theme 1: Geographical Inconvenience for Family Visits

Patients expressed mixed opinions about the new location of the clinic. While some patients found it inconvenient due to its distance from the city, which made family visits difficult, others appreciated the quiet, remote setting. This theme indicates that the clinic's relocation outside the city has both positive and negative implications.

Example from patient feedback:

"It was convenient when the hospital was in the city, near the oncology center. Now, it's inconvenient because it's so far from the city, and it's hard for my relatives to visit." (Patient, 52 years old)

Sub-theme 2: Preference for Quiet, Remote Location

A portion of patients, however, noted that the clinic's quiet location outside the city offered peace and a calming environment that was conducive to their care.

Example from patient feedback:

"I like the peaceful setting here. It's far from the hustle and bustle of the city, and it gives us peace." (Patient, 61 years old)

2. Nurse-Patient Interaction

Theme: Professionalism and Politeness

Sub-theme 1: Issues with Nurse Etiquette and Rudeness

A recurring theme in patient responses involved dissatisfaction with the level of politeness and etiquette displayed by the nursing staff. Many patients reported experiencing instances of rudeness, which they felt affected the quality of their care.

Example from patient feedback:

"The nurses are not very polite, a bit rough, and often late for work. Their appearance is also a concern." (Patient, 59 years old)

Sub-theme 2: Professional Competence

Despite concerns over manners, patients generally agreed that nurses were skilled and competent in providing care. No significant complaints were raised regarding the nurses' medical knowledge or ability to perform their duties.

Example from patient feedback:

"The nurses know their work, and if anything is unclear, they explain it to me." (Patient, 48 years old)

3. Work Stress and Emotional Demands on Nurses

Theme: Emotional and Physical Stress

Sub-theme 1: Stress from Patient Non-compliance

Nurses acknowledged experiencing stress, particularly when patients did not follow medical instructions, which could lead to frustration. However, nurses also stated they were able to manage these stressors and separate their work from personal life.

Example from nurse feedback:

"I get irritated when patients don't follow the doctor's orders. It's stressful, but I try to manage it and not take it home with me." (Nurse, 40 years old)

Sub-theme 2: Emotional Resilience in Care

Despite the challenges, nurses consistently showed emotional resilience, emphasizing the importance of patient satisfaction in helping them cope with work-related stress. They found that seeing patients' well-being improve eased the emotional toll of their job.

Example from nurse feedback:

"When I see that my patients are happy and satisfied, it makes it easier to deal with stress." (Nurse, 38 years old)

4. Nurse Motivation and Career Satisfaction**Theme:Job Satisfaction and Commitment****Sub-theme 1:Pride in the Nursing Profession**

Nurses expressed pride in their profession and did not regret their choice to become healthcare workers. Many nurses attributed their career satisfaction to the personal fulfillment they gained from helping others, particularly elderly patients in palliative care.

Example from nurse feedback:

"I decided to become a nurse because I wanted to help people. I have no regrets." (Nurse, 31 years old)

Sub-theme 2:Challenges of Working in Palliative Care

While nurses were proud of their work, many also acknowledged the emotional and physical challenges of working in palliative care. The demands of providing care for seriously ill and often terminally ill patients can take a toll on the nurses' mental and emotional health.

Example from nurse feedback:

"The work is emotionally draining, especially when you care for terminally ill patients. It's hard, but it's also fulfilling." (Nurse, 38 years old)

5. Recommendations for Improving Nurse Work Conditions**Theme:Work Conditions and Support****Sub-theme 1:Need for Better Compensation and Benefits**

A recurring theme in patient and nurse feedback was the need for better financial support for nursing staff. Many nurses felt that the demanding nature of their work warranted higher salaries and more significant benefits.

Example from patient feedback:

"Nurses deserve higher pay for their hard work in palliative care. It's a physically and emotionally draining job." (Patient, 46 years old)

Example from nurse feedback:

"I think nurses should be compensated better, especially for working in palliative care. It's emotionally and

physically exhausting." (Nurse, 46 years old)

6. Nurse-Patient Relationship and Care Quality**Theme:Humanistic Care and Emotional Support****Sub-theme 1:Building Strong Relationships with Patients**

Nurses emphasized the importance of forming strong, empathetic relationships with their patients. This personal connection, they believed, helped to improve patient well-being and led to more positive outcomes in the care setting.

Example from nurse feedback:

"We try to establish a personal connection with our patients. It helps them feel more comfortable and cared for, which is important in palliative care." (Nurse, 40 years old)

Sub-theme 2:Empathy and Understanding in Palliative Care

The theme of empathy was a key aspect of both nurse and patient feedback. Nurses reported that they worked hard to understand and support the emotional needs of their patients, many of whom were dealing with serious, life-threatening conditions.

Example from nurse feedback:

"We deal with patients who are often upset or angry due to their illness, and we try to provide comfort and empathy. It's important to be understanding." (Nurse, 38 years old)

7. Support for New Nurses**Theme:Mentorship and Development for New Nurses****Sub-theme 1:Encouragement for New Graduates to Join Palliative Care**

Many nurses expressed their belief that working in palliative care was an excellent way for young nurses to learn essential qualities such as empathy, endurance, and communication. They encouraged recent nursing graduates to consider starting their careers in this field.

Example from nurse feedback:

"New nurses should come here. They'll learn compassion, patience, and how to deal with different people. It's very rewarding." (Nurse, 46 years old)

Table 1: Analysis Summary of Key Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme	Key Insights
1. Clinic Environment and Accessibility	Geographical Inconvenience for Family Visits	Mixed feedback: Some patients find the clinic's remote location inconvenient for family visits, while others value the peace it offers.
	Preference for Quiet, Remote Location	Positive feedback from patients who appreciate the clinic's tranquil environment, which aids in their overall well-being.
2. Nurse-Patient Interaction	Issues with Nurse Etiquette and Rudeness	Some patients express dissatisfaction with nurses' manners, citing rudeness and lack of professionalism, which affects care quality.
	Professional Competence	Patients recognize nurses' skills and competence in providing medical care, despite complaints about behavior.
3. Work Stress and Emotional Demands	Stress from Patient Non-compliance	Nurses report stress when patients do not follow treatment instructions, but they manage by keeping personal and professional lives separate.
	Emotional Resilience in Care	Despite stress, nurses find emotional resilience through patient satisfaction, which helps alleviate work-related emotional tolls.
4. Nurse Motivation and Career Satisfaction	Pride in the Nursing Profession	Nurses take pride in their work, expressing fulfillment from helping patients, particularly in palliative care.
	Challenges of Working in Palliative Care	Emotional and physical demands of caring for terminally ill patients can be draining, but nurses find the work fulfilling and rewarding.
5. Recommendations for Improving Nurse Work Conditions	Need for Better Compensation and Benefits	Both nurses and patients advocate for better financial compensation due to the emotional and physical demands of palliative care work.
6. Nurse-Patient Relationship and Care Quality	Building Strong Relationships with Patients	Nurses emphasize the importance of forming empathetic, trusting relationships with patients, which improves overall care and patient comfort.
	Empathy and Understanding in Palliative Care	Nurses prioritize understanding patients' emotional needs, providing comfort and emotional support throughout care.
7. Support for New Nurses	Encouragement for New Graduates to Join Palliative Care	Experienced nurses encourage new graduates to enter palliative care to develop essential skills such as empathy, endurance, and communication.

DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of the patient and nurse feedback highlights the multifaceted challenges and rewards within a palliative care setting. The results offer valuable insights into the clinic environment, nurse-patient interactions, emotional and physical demands on nursing staff, and the professional satisfaction of nurses. In this discussion, we will explore the implications of these findings and examine them in relation to existing literature on healthcare settings, particularly in palliative care.

1. Clinic Environment and Accessibility

One of the key challenges identified in this study is the geographical inconvenience of the clinic's remote location. Many patients expressed frustration with the difficulty family members face when visiting due to the clinic's distance from the city. This aligns with findings from Carter (2019), which highlight that access to healthcare services, particularly in rural or remote areas, often creates barriers for families and caregivers¹⁹. While some patients appreciated the peace and serenity of the location, others felt isolated and disconnected from their loved ones, a common issue in remote

healthcare settings^{14,15}. The dual nature of this feedback suggests that clinics should strike a balance between offering a peaceful environment conducive to healing and ensuring accessibility for families and caregivers.

In contrast, some patients preferred the quiet, remote setting of the clinic, which is consistent with research that highlights the therapeutic value of peaceful environments in palliative care. Studies have shown that tranquil settings can help reduce stress, enhance the emotional well-being of patients, and improve their overall experience¹⁶. Therefore, clinic locations must be carefully considered to meet the diverse needs of both patients and their families.

Understanding the long-term trends in the management of chronic conditions, such as glaucoma, is essential for improving patient care. A comprehensive bibliometric review spanning four decades highlighted the evolution of treatment approaches and the growing emphasis on patient education and adherence^{17,18}.

2. Nurse-Patient Interaction

The issue of nurse etiquette and rudeness emerged as a significant concern for many patients. Several participants described instances of rudeness, tardiness, and lack of professionalism, which affected their perceptions of care quality. This mirrors findings in the literature, which indicate that poor communication and unprofessional behavior from healthcare providers can negatively impact patient satisfaction and outcomes²⁰. Etiquette and professionalism are critical in palliative care settings, where patients often experience heightened emotions and anxiety. Thus, providing training in communication skills and cultural competence for nursing staff could help mitigate these concerns²¹.

Patient satisfaction with nursing care is a critical factor in palliative care settings. A cross-sectional study on factors influencing patient satisfaction highlighted the importance of empathy, communication, and professionalism in shaping positive patient experiences²². The role of nurses in providing independent consultations has been increasingly recognized as a key component of patient-centered care. A qualitative study exploring the experiences of nurses in Kazakhstan revealed that independent consultations not only enhance patient trust but also contribute to the professional growth of nurses²³.

On the other hand, despite these concerns, patients largely recognized the nurses' professional competence and ability to provide effective medical care. This is

consistent with studies that show patients' ability to differentiate between a nurse's technical competence and interpersonal behaviors. Nurses in palliative care are often highly skilled in managing complex symptoms and end-of-life care²⁴. This suggests that while interpersonal issues may affect patient experiences, clinical competence remains a critical component of the overall care provided.

3. Work Stress and Emotional Demands on Nurses

The emotional and physical demands of working in palliative care were a central theme in the nurses' feedback. Nurses reported experiencing stress when patients did not comply with medical instructions, which is consistent with previous research indicating that non-compliance can lead to increased emotional strain on healthcare professionals²⁵. However, nurses in the study also demonstrated emotional resilience, emphasizing the importance of patient satisfaction as a source of motivation to cope with stress. This finding aligns with the work of Rothschild (2019), who found that nurses in high-stress environments, such as palliative care, often derive emotional satisfaction from positive patient outcomes, which helps buffer against burnout²⁶.

Furthermore, the emotional resilience demonstrated by nurses is critical in maintaining their mental well-being and effectiveness in providing care. Nurses who are emotionally resilient tend to have better coping mechanisms and are less likely to experience burnout, which is a significant concern in palliative care settings due to the high emotional toll of the work²⁷. Continuing education on stress management and providing support networks could enhance emotional resilience and reduce the potential for burnout in this field.

4. Nurse Motivation and Career Satisfaction

Nurses in the study expressed pride in their profession and satisfaction in providing care for terminally ill patients. This sense of professional pride is often linked to intrinsic motivation, which has been shown to improve job satisfaction and overall career fulfillment²⁸. Many nurses indicated that working in palliative care provided personal fulfillment, particularly in helping elderly patients navigate the challenges of end-of-life care. However, the emotional and physical demands of working with terminally ill patients were acknowledged as challenging. This is consistent with existing literature, which points to the emotional toll that palliative care

work can take on nurses. Long shifts, high patient acuity, and the emotional demands of end-of-life care can lead to emotional exhaustion and compassion fatigue²³. It is essential, therefore, to provide ongoing support and self-care resources for nurses in palliative care to help mitigate these stressors.

5. Recommendations for Improving Nurse Work Conditions

Both nurses and patients identified the need for improved compensation and benefits, particularly in recognition of the emotional and physical demands of palliative care. This is consistent with Aiken (2018), who argue that fair compensation is essential to ensure the retention of skilled nurses, especially in fields such as palliative care, where the emotional toll is particularly high¹⁴. Improved compensation not only helps retain experienced staff but also serves as an acknowledgment of the challenging nature of the work. In addition to financial support, other strategies, such as increasing staffing levels, providing opportunities for professional development, and improving work-life balance, could help enhance nurse satisfaction and well-being. For instance, a study on educational interventions for glaucoma patients in Kazakhstan demonstrated the positive impact of such programs on medication adherence and overall health outcomes²⁹.

6. Nurse-Patient Relationship and Care Quality

The importance of building strong, empathetic relationships with patients in palliative care was emphasized by the nurses in the study. The feedback highlighted that strong interpersonal connections between nurses and patients improve patient comfort and overall care quality, particularly in emotionally sensitive contexts like palliative care. This is consistent with the literature, which consistently shows that empathetic care is a core component of high-quality palliative care²⁷. By fostering trust and understanding, nurses can alleviate the emotional and psychological distress that patients face at the end of life.

7. Support for New Nurses

Finally, experienced nurses in the study encouraged new graduates to pursue careers in palliative care. They emphasized the development of essential qualities such as empathy, patience, and communication skills in this field. Research suggests that mentorship and strong

support systems are crucial for new nurses entering challenging areas like palliative care. By fostering mentorship programs and providing educational opportunities for new nurses, healthcare institutions can ensure that young nurses are adequately prepared for the emotional and technical demands of palliative care.

CONCLUSION

The thematic analysis of patient and nurse feedback reveals several important insights into the current state of palliative care in the clinic. Clinic environment and accessibility, nurse-patient interaction, work stress, and career satisfaction emerged as key themes. The need for improved work conditions, empathy, and professional development for nurses was also highlighted. Both patients and nurses recognized the emotional demands of palliative care, and the importance of humanistic care and emotional resilience in improving patient well-being and the overall quality of care.

Moving forward, these findings can inform targeted interventions to improve both the working conditions of nurses and the overall patient experience in palliative care settings.

This study underscores the importance of addressing both the environmental and interpersonal factors that influence the quality of palliative care. Improving nurse training in communication, addressing work-related stressors, and offering better compensation are crucial steps in enhancing nurse satisfaction and care quality. Additionally, supporting the development of strong nurse-patient relationships, as well as providing adequate mentorship for new nurses, will help ensure the continued delivery of compassionate, high-quality care in palliative settings.

Authors's contribution

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