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## Original Article

# A preliminary study on the application of storytelling among hospice care interest group

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To explore the effect of storytelling on hospice care learning in the interest group.  
**Methods:** Storytelling was used among 7 master of science in nursing (MSN) students in the hospice care interest group. The effect of storytelling was evaluated by the combination of students' reflect diary and the evaluation form.

**Results:** Five themes were extracted from diary including: relieving the suffering of the patients, understanding and respecting patients' choice, communicating, team working, and family supporting. Among 5 items of the evaluation form, there were 4 items which were scored as either agree or strongly agree.

**Conclusions:** Students reflected that the storytelling helped them recognize the importance of relieving the suffering, respecting and understanding, communicating, team working, and family supporting in the hospice care.

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## 1. Introduction

In order to prepare the students to provide high quality care for end-of-life patients and their families, teachers always want students to not only grasp the essential knowledge and skills to meet patients' physical needs, but also truly understand the psychological and social needs of patients and their family members. Traditional lecture can exactly tell students

about the concrete physical characteristics of end-of-life patients and related medical and nursing care techniques, but it hardly reveals the patients' experience and psychological needs. Storytelling is a teaching method which is based on a carefully chosen story to illustrate and explain the things that teachers want students to know. This teaching method also helps students think further from the story about the insights, ideas, feelings, and experiences that remain in the story [1,2].

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**Table 1 – Evaluation results from 7 MSN on storytelling [n (%)].**

| Items                                          | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Agree   | Strongly agree |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|---------|----------------|
| Promoted new insights                          | –                 | –        | –                         | 1(14.3) | 6(85.7)        |
| Helped me think more critically                | –                 | –        | –                         | 1(14.3) | 6(85.7)        |
| Fostered deep learning                         | –                 | –        | –                         | 2(28.6) | 5(71.4)        |
| Will help me apply this content to my practice | –                 | –        | –                         | 2(28.6) | 5(71.4)        |
| Changed my perceptions                         | –                 | –        | 2(28.6)                   | 3(42.8) | 2(28.6)        |

Storytelling has been considered as having some unique effects on sharing the feelings and experience [1–3].

This study preliminarily applied the storytelling in an interest group on hospice care. The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of storytelling on hospice care learning in the interest group.

## 2. Subjects and methods

This is a descriptive research design.

### 2.1. Research subjects

A convenient sampling was used in this study to recruit 7 full-time MSN students in an interest group on hospice care. They were all female; the range of age was from 24 to 30 ( $26.1 \pm 2.0$ ) years old; two were first year graduate students, three were second year students, and the other two were third year students. Every student had experience of seeing or caring of end-of-life patients, but they all reflected that they lacked of practical experience of taking care hospice care patients. That was why they have participated in the interest group of hospice care.

### 2.2. Teaching methods

Storytelling was used to share the experience of end-of-life patients and their family-members with students. The video 'Good Death' (30 min) was used in this study which was shared by Professor Strodtman from University of Michigan School of Nursing. This story is based on a real case, Mr. Evan Mayday, a patient at the end of life with high paraplegia by an injury. This video documents Mr. Evan and their family members physical, psychological, and social needs at the special period. This video also records how physicians, nurses, social workers work together to meet the Mr. Evan Mayday and their family needs [4].

The video was played for students in two classes (1 h for each class). In order to help students well understand the contents of the video, the teachers translated some difficult sentences for students and provided some essential information about health care system of US. Each time, after the video watching, students had a discussion for 20 min. After one week of the class, students were asked to write their reflect diaries about the video.

### 2.3. Evaluation methods

The effect of storytelling was evaluated by the combination of students' reflect diaries and the evaluation form. The evaluation form was self-designed by Dr. Strodtman and her

colleagues to evaluate the effect of storytelling. It was considered as with an acceptable content validity. Two faculties in the research group translated the evaluation form back-to-back and final agreement on the translation was received in the research group. The evaluation form was a Likert 5 scale, from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

### 2.4. Data analysis methods

SPSS 16.0 was used to enter the data. Descriptive statistics was applied to describe the basic information. Content analysis was used to analyze the reflected diaries and extract the themes [5]. Two research group members independently analyzed the diaries, and disagreement on the extracted themes was discussed in the research group, and the agreement was finally achieved.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. The results of the evaluation form (Table 1)

### 3.2. The themes extracted from diary

After analyzing the 7 copies of the reflected diaries, five themes were extracted: relieving the suffering of the patients, understanding and respecting patients' choice, communicating, team working, and family supporting.

#### 3.2.1. Relieving the suffering of the patients

Relieving the suffering of the patients has been mentioned in the diaries for 73 times. The symptom of breathlessness that Mr. Evan had in the video reminded students the experience they had in their previous practice and triggered them to think more about the end-of-life symptoms, such as pain, breathlessness, and fatigue. Students mentioned that healthcare personnel should apply modern medical techniques and skills to relieve patients' suffering. For example, students mentioned that 'many patients go through the tough process before death, especially the physical suffering, such as pain and breathlessness. We, as healthcare personnel, cannot comfort patients only with the sentence that the death is not avoidable. We should try our best to relieve their suffering by applying the medical techniques.'

As the students highlighted physical pain, they also recognized the psychological uncomfortableness among patients, such as the powerlessness that Mr. Evan revealed in the video. Five students had mentioned in their diaries that meeting patients' needs was also a way to relieve psychological suffering among hospice care patients. Some students

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