



## knowledge and Attitude of Nursing Students' towards Palliative Care

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### Abstract:

**Background:** Palliative care refers to the comfort care that is given to terminally ill person so as to promote comfort and relieve pain.

**Objective:** To assess the knowledge and attitude of Nursing students' towards palliative care.

**Methods:** A descriptive study that conducted during the period of 2 /2/ 2024 to 1 /3/ 2024 at college of nursing / university of Mosul . Probability (simple random sample) was selected for the present study. A sample of students college of nursing in Mosul university (100 students). The subject's acceptance to participate in the study was through the use of a specialized consent form.

**Results:** This study finding the shows that most of the sample participating in the study amounted to 100 nursing students, that most of the study sample was from 24 to 27 years old, at a rate of 77%, and that the sample of female was higher than that of male by (71%), Most of the sample was unmarried, with a high percentage (88%).

**Conclusion:** The findings of this study showed that nursing student are not knowledgeable about palliative care in college of nursing and was the moderate attitude towards palliative care. This study emphasize the need for developing all nursing school curricula as well as continuing nursing and medical education program offerings.

**Keywords:** knowledge, attitude, Nursing students', palliative care.

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### Introduction:

Life-threatening diseases cause a decrease in the quality of life and they bring about various problems including physical, psychosocial, and spiritual, and especially pain. In patients with diseases that cannot be treated despite the advances in medicine, approaches aiming at reducing the patient's distress and improving the quality of life should be applied. In accordance with this view, the

approach of palliative care has been developed in order to meet the needs of patients and their relatives <sup>(1)</sup>. Palliative care refers to the comfort care that is given to terminally ill person so as to promote comfort and relieve pain. The goal of this care is to provide comfort and highest-quality life; and to not only cure patients, but also address their mental and spiritual needs along with the physical ones <sup>(2)</sup>. The term 'palliative' is derived from the

Latin word 'pallium', meaning a piece of cloth or a curtain <sup>(3)</sup>. One essential characteristic of palliative care is the necessity of the team approach.

The nurse who spends a long time with patients and aims to give them the best-quality care has a prominent place in this team. This is because a nurse is the one member of the health discipline who deals with the life-threatening diseases most closely and directly provides care to patients whose death is imminent <sup>(4)</sup>. Nurses are highest in number when it comes to the healthcare providers in almost every country; they are often the primary caregivers. Nurses have been historically involved in the provision of palliative care. They have played various roles in the development of palliative care, offering leadership, support, and focus for the movement <sup>(5)</sup>. It is necessary for the palliative patients to be admitted to hospital because the problems cannot be handled at home due to the insufficient family care. More than half of the home patients move in their last month's only to die because of acute medical problems, lack of professional home care, or an overload of the informal care <sup>(6)</sup>. A very important value for palliative care is to enable people to make decision regarding the selection of their end-of-life care and the place of death. Data also suggest that most people with advanced illnesses prefer to be cared for and die at home or close to it <sup>(7)</sup>. Nurses as well as other healthcare workers often feel unprepared for their tasks in palliative care and a real much need of more expertise in the field of pain and symptom management, communication, and dealing with ethical dilemmas <sup>(8)</sup>.

## Methods and Materials:

A descriptive study that was conducted during the period of 2 /2/ 2024 to 1 /3/ 2024 at college of nursing / university of Mosul. The present study was conducted at Nineveh Governorate. It is a governorate in northern Iraq, with Mosul as its capital. Mosul is Iraq's second largest city, located 465 kilometers north of Baghdad. The sample was collected from students of the College of Nursing -

University of Mosul. The study has been conducted in a period of three months extending from 2 /2/ 2024 to 1 /3/ 2024 at college of nursing / university of Mosul. Probability (simple random sample) was selected for the present study. A sample of student's college of nursing in Mosul university (100 students). The subject's acceptance to participate in the study was through the use of a specialized consent form. The interview was conducted to fill out the questionnaire with in students nursing colleges in university of Mosul included and each one of them needed approximately (15-20) minutes to complete the interviewing and answering the questionnaire. The information of data was collected through a questionnaire used to assess knowledge and attitude of Nursing students towards palliative care. The instruments of the study were composed of (3) parts, which included the following: Part One: Demographic characteristics that include (ages, class, gender and marital status). Part Two: To assess knowledge of Nursing students' towards palliative care. It consisted of (10) multiple choice questions, in three answers (Yes, No, I don't know). Part three: To assess attitude of Nursing students' towards palliative care. It consisted of (12) multiple choice questions, in five answers (strong agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strong disagree). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used to analyze the statistical results. A descriptive approach was applied. Using percentages and frequencies to calculate student's demographic description characteristics <sup>(9-60)</sup>. To estimate the value of the data, means and standard deviation ( $\pm$  SD) were used. Using of Pearson coefficient correlation (test-retest) for testing the study tools reliability.

**Table (1): Distribution of Demographical Characteristics of sample (100)**

Variables	No.	Frequency (%)	Mean +SD
(A):Age			
20 – 23Years	10	10%	Mean (25.1) SD (1.88)
24 – 27 Years	77	77%	
28 years and more	13	13%	
(B):Sex			
Male	29	29%	
Female	71	71%	
(C): Class			
3 stage	41	41%	
4 stage	59	59%	
(D): Marital status			
Married	8	8%	
Single	88	88%	
Divorced	4	4%	

Table No. 1 shows that most of the sample participating in the study amounted to 100 nursing students, that most of the study sample was from

24 to 27 years old, at a rate of 77%, and that the sample of female was higher than that of male by (71%), Most of the sample was unmarried, with a high percentage (88%).

**Table (3): Nursing students knowledge towards palliative care (N=100)**

	knowledge	Yes	NO	I do not know
1	Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on relieving pain and other symptoms in people with serious illnesses.	15	56	29
2	The palliative care team seeks to provide comfort and improve the quality of life for the patient and their families.	30	25	45
3	Palliative care services are provided by a team of specially trained doctors, nurses, social workers, clergy and other specialists.	44	12	44
4	Palliative care can be provided to people with serious or life-threatening illnesses of all age groups	23	43	34
5	A palliative care plan is designed to fit your life and needs	21	39	40
6	Palliative care services include support for many difficult situations and decisions that you and your family face as a result of a serious illness.	44	15	39
7	Referrals: A palliative care specialist may refer you to other doctors, such as a psychiatrist or complementary medicine specialist.	27	13	60
8	Advance care planning A member of the palliative care team can talk with you about the goals and things you want to achieve from your care.	22	30	48
9	The palliative care team collaborates with your doctors to ensure good coordination of your care.	55	10	35
10	Research suggests that utilizing palliative care services early can improve the quality of life for people with serious illnesses.	30	25	45

**Table 3. Assessment of the nursing student' knowledge levels of palliative care**

Knowledge level	Frequency	Percent
Poor Knowledge	51	51%
Fair Knowledge	33	33%
Good Knowledge	14	14%
Total	100	100%

**Table No:( 3)A shows that nursing students' knowledge about palliative care was very weak.**

**Table (4):Nursing students attitude towards palliative care (N=100)**

	Attitude	Strong agree	Agree	Natural	Dis-agree	St-dis-agree
1	Palliative care is provided only to the hospitalized patient	14	22	44	12	8
2	As a patient nearing death, the nurse should withdraw from involvement with the patient	33	9	15	27	16
3	It is helpful for a person with a chronic illness to express feelings.	11	25	23	22	18
4	The length of time required to provide nursing care. A dying person will love me	44	5	0	2	49
5	The family should maintain as natural an environment as possible for their dying members	67	7	12	13	1
6	The family should participate in the physical care of the dying person.	21	44	22	7	6
7	It is difficult to form a close relationship with the family of a dying member	15	13	21	43	8
8	Nursing care should be provided to the patient's family throughout the period of grief and bereavement	11	14	33	12	30
9	Nursing care must extend to the family of a dying patient	7	13	20	33	27
10	When a patient asks, "Nurse, am I going to die?" I think it is best to change the topic to something cheerful	11	15	2	70	2
11	I fear I will become chronically friends with the sick and dying	14	7	33	32	14
12	I would be uncomfortable if I entered the room of a terminally ill person and found him crying	24	25	1	20	30

**Table 5. Assessment of the nursing student' attitude of palliative care**

Attitude level	Frequency	Percent
Poor attitude	36	36%
Moderate attitude	59	59%
Good attitude	5	5%
Total	100	100%

**Table No.5.A shows that nursing students' attitude about palliative care was moderate .**

## Discussion:

This is the first study of its kind conducted in Iraq. Literature review does not indicate any comprehensive study for palliative care knowledge targeting nurses' practices anywhere in our country. Nurses are the most important first contacts of patients. It is necessary to first establish nursing students baseline knowledge and beliefs so that relevant educational programs can be initiated. Assessing nursing knowledge is also important because knowledge plays a causal role in attitude or behavioral consistency <sup>(61)</sup>. In this study the description of knowledge scores has shown that 14 % had good knowledge, about palliative care. To the contrary this study finding in <sup>(62)</sup>. showed that 30.5% of nurses had as good knowledge; However, <sup>(63)</sup> study found in Thai general physicians more knowledgeable 55.7% than this study. The low level of nursing student's knowledge about palliative care in this study could also be associated with the lack of specific palliative care units in Iraq. The description of attitude scores shows that 59% of them had moderate attitude towards palliative care. This finding agreed with the findings of Kassa et al that 259 (76%) had favorable attitude towards Palliative care. And <sup>(64)</sup> indicated 92.8% of nursing students had favorable attitude ( $56.7 \pm 8.5$ ) towards palliative care. A favorable attitude towards the care of dying patients was observed in the current study. Attitude has a pivotal influence on the quality of palliative care provided <sup>(65)</sup>; this result is in line with previous studies conducted In Muslim countries, including Palestine <sup>(66)</sup> and Turkey <sup>(67)</sup>; however, the attitude scores are slightly lower than those reported in China Mainland<sup>(68)</sup>, the USA <sup>(69)</sup> and Sweden<sup>(70)</sup>; however, it contradicts another study conducted in China which reported negative attitudes among nursing students<sup>(71)</sup>. The differences across studies might be attributed to educational, religious and cultural differences across nations <sup>(72)</sup>. The favorable attitude among Iraq nursing students justified the Islamic religious beliefs that acknowledge the inevitability of death and accept death as a normal process; however, the attitudes of Iraq students could be strengthening through enhancing their knowledge about Palliative care.

The variability between countries suggests how culture can influence the formation of attitudes regarding death and dying. The slightly high score of attitudes in the USA, Sweden, and China might be ascribed to the long development history of Palliative care research and policies. For instance, in Sweden, most universities provide Palliative care education for nursing students.

## Conclusion:

The findings of this study showed that nursing student are not knowledgeable about palliative care in college of nursing and was the moderate attitude towards palliative care. This study emphasizes the need for developing all nursing school curricula as well as continuing nursing and medical education program offerings.

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