

CASE STUDIES IN NURSING



Case Studies in Palliative and End-of-Life Care

Margaret L. Campbell



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Edited by

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Introduction

Margaret L. Campbell

Case Studies In Palliative and End-of-Life Care is written for clinicians caring for patients and their families across diagnoses, illness trajectories, settings for care, and models of care delivery. All of the contributing authors are advanced practice nurses who bring their hands-on experience and join it with the evidence base for their respective chapters; hence, each chapter reflects the art and science of palliative care.

The conceptual framework for *Case Studies In Palliative and End of Life Care* is the Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care produced by the National Consensus Project (NCP). For this book we embrace the definition of palliative care from the NCP as follows: “The goal of palliative care is to prevent and relieve suffering and to support the best possible quality of life for patients and their families, regardless of the stage of the disease or the need for other therapies. Palliative care is both a philosophy of care and an organized, highly structured system for delivering care. Palliative care expands traditional disease-model medical treatments to include the goals of enhancing quality of life for patient and family, optimizing function, helping with decision-making, and providing opportunities for personal growth. As such, it can be delivered concurrently with life-prolonging care or as the main focus of care.”¹

Each chapter begins with a case history followed by identification of a single clinical question raised by the case. A comprehensive, evidence-based discussion of the clinical problem follows and the chapter concludes by returning to the case for the outcomes of the treatment plan. Each case ends with “Take Away Points”—succinct summaries of the chapter.

Case studies rely on “story” to engage the learner and are an effective method for clinical teaching because they mimic the clinical encounter.

Stories are increasingly recognized as central to learning, facilitating a shared framework for understanding and enabling individuals to learn from one another. Stories also serve a purpose because people tell stories to make diverse information coherent, to give meaning and convey understanding, and to situate concepts in practice.²

Case Studies In Palliative and End-of-Life Care is comprised of three sections: Communication, Symptom Management, and Family Care, with a number of case studies in each section. The cases represent a cross-section of diagnoses including cancer, heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chronic kidney disease, and dementia. Illness trajectories discussed in the cases range from newly diagnosed to the moment of death. Settings of care are home or hospital. The cases may represent actual patients cared for by the author or may be a composite of similar cases. In no case can the identity of an actual patient or family be identified.

It is my hope that this collection of case studies will be employed for self-learning and for classroom teaching.



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