

Post Mortem Nursing Care Effectiveness As Perceived by US Hospital Staff Nurses

Mikel W Hand, EdD, RN, OCN, NE-BC, NEA-BC
Assistant Professor of Nursing
College of Nursing and Health Professions

Disclosures

Author: Mikel W Hand, EdD, RN, OCN, NE-BC, NEA-BC , University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, IN, USA

Learner Objectives:

1. Describe common elements of postmortem nursing care that may impact the cosmetic appearance of a deceased patient.
2. Examine completed research concerning hospital staff nurse perceptions concerning the effectiveness of the postmortem nursing care that they provide

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Background

- Death is a significant life event
- Many people throughout the world die in hospitals (Flory et al., 2004; Gomes and Higginson, 2008; Hand, 2013)
- Nurses have a significant role in the provision of care for the deceased
- Post mortem care involves a complex set of activities that begin a death and continue through the process of final disposition (American Association of Critical Care, 2003; Hand, 2013)

Background

Decisions and arrangements:

- Loved ones are left with many difficult decisions including if public or private viewing will be included in the funeral arrangements (Davies, 2002; Hand, 2013; Kwan, 2002; National Funeral Directors Association, 2013).
- In the United casketing and burial is the most frequent method selected for final disposition.
- Public or private viewing may be part of this.

Background

A significant Act for Nurses

- Demonstration of respect for the deceased and achieving a sense of closure
- A critical element in the completing the process of patient centered care that is informed by values and preferences (QSEN, 2014)

Background

Contribution to facilitating bereavement

- Viewing allows opportunity for loved ones to express grief and to say good bye
- As a result, the post mortem nursing care practices implemented by nurses contribute to facilitating this process.

Problem

- Prior research demonstrates that post mortem nursing care practices vary by institution (Hand, 2013; Smith-Stoner & Hand, 2012).
- Limited research in this area has been carried out.
- There is a need for further inquiry to build on the body of knowledge pertaining to post mortem nursing care

Purpose

- To Examine post mortem nursing care effectiveness from the perspective of the hospital staff registered nurse.
- Explore what nurses perceive concerning the care they provide, whether they believe the interventions help or hinder the process of achieving a desired cosmetic appearance, and to reveal any alternative recommendations that may emerge.

Research Questions

- What do registered nurses perceive concerning the effectiveness of the physical post mortem nursing care that they provide?
- What alternative recommendations have they formulated that differ from their typical practices?

Effectiveness Defined

- For the purpose of this study: Effectiveness refers to the ability of this care to aid in producing a desired cosmetic result with further body preparation (Hand, 2013; Mayer, 2012).
- Preparation may or may not include the use of cosmetics or embalming.

Sampling

- Convenience sample of 34 registered nurse members of a state nursing association in the US
- Association assisted by forwarding and email with information concerning the study and information on how to participate
- Association membership limited to registered nurses only. All other classifications and unlicensed personnel were excluded

Methods

- A qualitatively driven survey methodology with open ended questions was used
- Data were collected using a web based questionnaire
- Very useful in terms of producing robust exemplars

Questionnaire

- 5 demographic questions and 20 open ended items. Open ended items focused on the following areas of physical post mortem care:
 1. Most frequent position the body is placed in
 2. Use of ligatures to secure extremities
 3. Removal or leaving in intravenous catheters and lines
 4. Removal or leaving in surgical tubes and drains
 5. Removal or placing in mouth of dentures and partial plates
 6. Cleansing of the body
 7. Identification and shrouding

Questionnaire

- For each area participant was asked bout typical practices, whether they perceived that they helped or hindered achieving a desired cosmet result and if they had any alternative recommendations.

Data Analysis

1. Reviewing each questionnaire several times
2. Initial coding to identify themes
3. Clustering based on similarity of meaning
4. Reviewed again twice to eliminate duplication and determine final theme labeling. (Hand, 2013; Smith-Stoner & Hand, 2012; Stoner, Hand, & Foley, 2010)
5. Identification of key exemplars in relation to themes.

Results

- Body Positioning (Flat)
 - Most frequent recurring position reported to in which to place the deceased
 - Majority of respondents reported perception that it aids in achieving a desired cosmetic appearance
 - Exemplars include suggestions for elevating the head
 - Elevating the head seems to limit swelling of the face
 - If obese with fluids draining I may choose elevated
 - Elevation presents a more natural appearance.
- ***Important to note: Exemplars focus on immediate appearance rather than impact with further preparation.

Results

- Use of ligatures and ties
 - Only 1 of the 34 participants reported use of these
 - Remainder reported the participation that these hinder the process of achieving a desired cosmetic result.

Results

- Intravenous Catheters and Lines
 - Majority of participants reported removing these as part of care. Only two exceptions to this.
 - Exemplars here do not include alternative recommendations, but rationale for removal based on immediate appearance of the deceased or hospital policy
 - Seems to present a less disturbing environment
 - Our hospital policy is to remove all
 - Patients families always comment on how relieved they are to see the equipment gone

Results

- Surgical drains and tubes
 - Removal as the predominant practice
 - Majority indicated that perceived removal aids in the process of producing a desired cosmetic result.
 - Exemplars include recommendations based to decide based on volume of drainage, but also rationale focused on immediate appearance and family consolation.
 - Chest tubes and abdominal drains may be left in and capped off if drainage is expected, otherwise are removed
 - Family is comforted by their removal
 - Much easier for family to view without equipment

Results

- Dentures and Partial plates
 - Leaving or placing dentures in mouth was reported in the predominant practice
 - Consistent perception is that this aids in achieving a desired cosmetic result.
 - However, exemplars suggest that placement of dentures may more often than not be based on where they are at death
 - Dentures and partials are left in the mouth unless they are already out they remain out
 - Usually don't put them back in due to rigors

Results

- Cleansing of the body
 - Varied practices
 - Participants reported positive effects on the cosmetic appearance of the deceased
 - Decisions based on time and family preferences
 - Exemplars indicate minimal bathing with cleansing of bodily fluids to using substances such as lavender oil, foam soap, and lotion.

Results

- Placement of identification tag
 - Great toe most frequent location
 - Alternative locations included wrist band, ankle band, or shroud covering the deceased
 - Exemplars focused on identification rather than location:
 - Just make sure the armband, toe band, and shroud band match
 - Use them, use them, check them, verify them, and never assume.

Results

- Wrapping and Shrouding
 - Practices reported varied substantially
 - Included no shrouding at all, use of a bed sheet, zippered plastic shrouds, or plastic sheeting wrapped around the body
 - All participants responded affirming that they believed that their practices were adequate to insure privacy and blood and body fluid exposure prevention.
 - Alternative recommendations: Covered morgue cart, relying on funeral home for thicker shrouds, cover with a blanket

Implications

- Opinions expressed are based on the particular practices used by the responding nurse
- Clear and consistent desire to provide comfort for loved ones and respect for the deceased
- Evident disconnect between these recommendations and the process of further body preparation.
- Perceptions held by registered nurses concerning the effectiveness of post mortem nursing care are not consistent with those reported in a previous study involving funeral directors (Hand, 2013)

Implications

- This may be indicative of a need for nurses to receive education concerning death are provided by funeral directors or others and how nursing interventions contribute to that continuation of care.

Limitations

- Geography and a single midwestern state
- Convenience sampling with no strategies to achieve maximum variation
- Anonymity of participants with no ability for follow up.
- Targeted and closed nature of questions:
Focused on key aspect of physical post mortem care may have hindered impromptu relevant information

Recommendations for Future Research

- Replication and larger scale studies on a national and international level
- Replication includes this study and 2013 published study involving funeral directors (University of Southern Indiana Foundation 2014 Faculty Research and Creative Work Grant for latter)
- Targeted research involving nursing education and post mortem nursing care curriculum

Conclusions

- The opportunity of viewing a deceased loved one can be of help to a bereaving family or friend
- The manner in which post mortem nursing care is provided can have an impact on the continuum of care for the deceased and the cosmetic results achieved from this
- Progress has been made, but much more to do. Future studies are warranted

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