

Nurses' Emotional Labor in Pediatric Palliative Care – Parents' Perception

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Introduction

Caring for children with palliative needs and their parents, and with the possibility of the child's death, is a challenging reality for nurses, because it requires experience and knowledge in managing emotions, as well as the implementation of emotion self-regulation strategies, considering the maintenance of the therapeutic relationship and well-being. Emotional labor in nursing is defined as the act or skills involved in caring for and recognizing the emotions of others, and not just the emotions experienced by nurses. The emotional dimension of nurses who care for children with palliative needs and their parents is still slightly visible and under-recognized.

Objective

Understand the nurses' emotional labor process when caring for children with palliative needs and their parents at home.

Methods

Study with a qualitative approach, anchored in the Interpretive/Constructivist Paradigm, using a Grounded Theory methodology, because it facilitates studying social processes. It has its roots in Symbolic Interactionism. The semi-structured interview was used as a data collection instrument. Participants were eight parents of children with palliative needs, who are cared for by nurses at home. All ethical procedures were followed and respected.

Results

Four main categories were identified that characterize the emotional labor of nurses and that emerged from the interviews with parents: experiencing emotions; caring for the child with palliative needs and their parents at home; building the relationship between parents, children with palliative needs and nurses over time and identifying results of the nurse's intervention.

Conclusion

The nurses' emotional labor highlights the individual effort that nurses take to manage their emotions and, simultaneously, facilitate the emotional management of parents and children with palliative needs. The research will contribute to the definition of emotional labor strategies nurses will implement when caring for children and parents in palliative care.

Keywords

Palliative Care; Emotions; Children; Parents; Nurses.

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