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# НЕКОТОРЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПАЛЛИАТИВНОЙ ПОМОЩИ И ЧТО ЗНАЮТ О НЕЙ СТУДЕНТЫ СЕСТРИНСКОГО ДЕЛА

# SOME FEATURES OF PALLIATIVE CARE AND WHAT NURSING STUDENTS KNOW ABOUT IT

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**Аннотация.** Паллиативная помощь - это важная часть современной медицины. Это не лечение болезни, это улучшение качества жизни пациентов с опасными для жизни или неизлечимыми заболеваниями. Оказание паллиативной помощи относится в основном к среднему медицинскому персоналу. Все медсестры должны знать ее принципы. В медицинских вузах будущие медицинские сестры изучают паллиативную помощь с первого курса.

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В статье представлены результаты исследования, проведенного в форме опроса студентов 1-го и 2-го курсов нашего института сестринского дела о понимании их будущей профессии. Целью было описать особенности паллиативной помощи и посмотреть, что знают об этом студенты.

**Abstract.** Palliative care is an important part of modern medicine. This is not a cure for a disease, it is an improvement in the quality of life of patients with life-threatening or incurable diseases. Palliative care is mainly provided by secondary medical staff. All nurses must know its principles. In medical schools, future nurses study palliative care from the first year. The article presents the results of a study conducted in the form of a survey of 1st and 2nd year students of our Institute of Nursing on the understanding of their future profession. The objective was to describe the features of palliative care and assess 1st and 2nd year nursing students' awareness towards them.

**Ключевые слова:** паллиативная помощь, студенты-медсестры, лечение симптомов, хоспис, Россия

**Keywords:** palliative care, nursing students, symptom management, hospice, Russia

Nowadays palliative care is a very important part of medicine. According to the definition which is used in Russia and in many other countries, palliative care is not about curing the disease. It is about improving quality of life of patients who have a life-threatening or incurable illness [1]. Also it helps their families. The main idea is to reduce suffering, to control pain and other symptoms, and to give psychological, social and spiritual support [2]. This is written in Russian guides too, for example in the Federal Law No. 323 "On the basics of protecting the health of citizens of the Russian Federation" (as amended for palliative care) [3]. At our university, Voronezh State Medical University named after N.N. Burdenko, future nurses study palliative care from their first year. But we wanted to check: do they really understand what is important? That is why we conducted this study.

**The aim** was to describe features of palliative care and to see what 1st and 2nd year students of our Institute of Nursing know about it.

**The tasks** were: 1) to find current features and goals of palliative care; 2) to check awareness of students towards the role of medical professionals in palliative care.

**Methods:** A questionnaire-based survey conducted among 70 students of Voronezh State Medical University. Statistical analysis carried out with Statistica 10.0.

So, We conducted a survey. It was a questionnaire made by Olga E. Borisova. The survey involved 1st and 2nd year students enrolled in the Nursing program. The total number of participants was 70 people. They filled forms anonymously and voluntarily. We used random sampling – just asked random students. They were asked about main Russian laws on palliative care. 63 students (90%) answered correctly. They named Federal Law No. 323 as well as Order of the Ministry of Health No. 345n [3,5]. 7 students (10%) mixed over the dates or names of the documents. Therefore, most of them know the laws. Then we asked the participants about the types of palliative care. Here, the answers varied. One student (2%) said that only medical care was needed. Two students (4%) – only social care. 30 students (42%) – only psychological care. And 37 students (52%) chose all three types: medical, social and psychological. Regarding the main goal of palliative care, all 70 students (100%) answered correctly: "to improve quality of life of patients with incurable disease until their death" [1]. Nobody made mistake here. Students were asked what symptoms are most common in palliative patients. They ranked depression first – 25 students (36%). Pain was the second – 15 students (21%). Then cachexia (weight loss, exhaustion) – 10 students (14%). Pressure ulcers – 6 (9%). Hypothermia – 5 (7%). Insomnia – 5 (7%). Obesity – 4 (6%) [6]. As for the age of palliative patients, most students believe such patients are old enough. 20 students (29%) said about 60–74 years old, 25 students (36%) – about 75–90 years old. Only 3 (4%) noticed children under 18. All 100% answered ‘yes’ when asked about what a hospice is and what its functions are [7]. Regarding cooperation with other organizations, students think palliative facilities cooperate mostly with charities – 40

(57%). Then they ranked religious organizations – 23 (33%). Volunteers – only 7 (10%). Finally, when asked about palliative care for patients' relatives, 55 students (79%) said relatives need psychological help. 10 (14%) – medical help, 5 (7%) – social help. Our study showed that nursing students in Voronezh generally know the main ideas of palliative care. All of them know the goal – to improve life quality. That is very good. But some problems exist. First, many students (42%) think psychological support is the main or the only type of palliative care. But in real practice, medical support (pain control, symptom management) is also very important. According to Russian clinical recommendations, pain relief is the first priority [8]. So teachers should explain this aspect better. Second, students ranked depression higher than pain. In real life, pain is more common. Many international sources say that up to 70-80% of palliative patients have significant pain [6,9]. Depression is also common but less common than pain. Perhaps, our students think depression is the most common because they read more about psychological problems. Or they think psychological suffering is worse.

**Results.** 90% of students know Russian legislative documents, 100% know main goal of palliative care. But 42% think that psychological support is the only important type of support. Also students ranked depression (36%) higher than pain (21%). This was surprising because in real practice pain is much more common.

**Conclusion**. Students have good theoretical knowledge but need more training in pain management.

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