

A Reflection on Professional Growth and Evidence-Based Practice

University of Pikeville

NURS 405: Nursing Synthesis & Capstone

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As I reflect on my journey through the RN-BSN program, I am filled with gratitude for the profound growth I have experienced both personally and professionally. Serving as a hospice nurse, this program has provided me with an opportunity to delve deeper into nursing theory, sharpen my critical thinking abilities, and seamlessly integrate evidence-based practice into my daily patient care. This transformative experience has not only elevated my clinical competence but has also profoundly reshaped my professional aspirations and reaffirmed my unwavering passion for compassionate end-of-life care.

Throughout the RN-BSN program, I've developed a stronger ability to analyze complex clinical situations and make decisions that are not only medically sound but also ethically and holistically appropriate. Hospice care often involves rapid changes in patient condition, intricate family dynamics, and challenging discussions about death and dying. The coursework challenged me to think beyond routine interventions and approach each scenario with a broader perspective, considering psychosocial, cultural, and ethical factors that influence patient outcomes. As a result, my ability to assess subtle cues, anticipate needs, and collaborate effectively with interdisciplinary team members has become more refined and intentional.

The program's emphasis on evidence-based practice has revolutionized my approach to patient care, particularly in hospice nursing where comfort and quality of life are paramount. Staying updated on the latest research related to pain management, symptom control, and caregiver support is crucial in this field. Through assignments and research, I developed the skills to critically evaluate journal articles and apply their findings to clinical protocols. For instance, I utilized recent evidence supporting the use of low-dose opioids for managing terminal dyspnea and was able to advocate for changes in medication regimens that enhanced patient

comfort. Consequently, I now routinely consult current guidelines and literature when making care decisions or educating caregivers.

One of the many applications of my learning throughout this program came during a case involving a non-verbal, bed-bound patient experiencing agitation. Drawing on my knowledge of communication and behavioral cues, I assessed the patient's nonverbal signs using the FLACC scale. I then collaborated with the team to adjust the patient's medication and environment. As a result, the patient became calmer, and the caregiver gained confidence and support. This experience underscored the significance of applying both academic knowledge and clinical judgment in real-world hospice scenarios.

Prior to enrolling in the RN-BSN program, my primary goal was to continue providing compassionate bedside care. However, as I gained a deeper understanding of leadership, quality improvement, and nursing advocacy, my goals have evolved. I now aspire to take on a leadership role within hospice care, possibly as a nurse educator or clinical coordinator, where I can mentor others and influence policy to improve end-of-life care delivery. Personally, I have developed a greater sense of confidence in my abilities and a renewed commitment to lifelong learning.

This program has been both rigorous and rewarding. It has strengthened my clinical practice, enhanced my ability to deliver evidence-based care, and expanded my professional vision. As I continue my career in hospice nursing, I am proud to bring with me the knowledge, skills, and values gained through the RN-BSN program—always grounded in compassion, respect, and excellence in care.