

Research Article

Attitudes, beliefs, and practices of Sri Lankan nurses toward cancer pain management: An ethnographic study

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Abstract

Cancer pain is a serious problem that requires specialized nursing knowledge. In the present ethnographic study, we sought to explore the experiences and cancer pain management practices of nurses working at a government hospital in Sri Lanka. Data were collected from October 2007 to January 2008, and were obtained by observing the nurses in a cancer ward, conducting semistructured interviews with 10 participants, and maintaining a research diary. To analyze the data, the data were coded, and an integrative process was implemented to develop categories. The results suggested that Sri Lankan nurses perform poor cancer pain management practices due to a lack of resources, a shortage of nurses, and poor workload allocation within the hospital. Additionally, the nurses are not autonomous, and are required to refer to medical staff for cancer pain management strategies. The nurses work in a task-oriented system that rarely acknowledges cancer patients' pain management needs. This study might improve nursing pain management practices for cancer patients and lead to changes in the curriculum of nursing courses in Sri Lanka.

Key words

cancer, ethnography, nurse, pain, pain management, Sri Lanka.
