



anf policy

australian nursing federation

nursing care of the person with a terminal illness

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing Federation that:

1. The role of the nurse within the context of this policy must remain within the boundaries of accepted nursing practice, which includes the profession's code of ethics and code of professional conduct, organisational guidelines and existing legislative framework.
2. Nurses should have an understanding of their ethical and legal responsibilities with regard to providing care for the person with a terminal illness.
3. People have a right to know if they have a condition for which a cure is not available and death is the expected outcome.
4. People with a terminal illness have the right to choose, both in the care and treatment which is provided to them and in the way in which that care and treatment is provided. Timely and adequate information must be provided to allow such choices to be made.
5. People with a terminal illness have the right to a death which is as dignified as possible, in a manner they themselves would define.
6. People with a terminal illness have the right to have their privacy respected.
7. People with a terminal illness have the right to refuse treatment.
8. The nursing role is to provide holistic care and treatment to the person with a terminal illness so they have maximum control over their care and treatment. This care should be regularly reviewed in collaboration with the person with the terminal illness, their selected family members¹ and with other members of the health care team. The nursing role includes being an advocate for the person with a terminal illness and their significant others.
9. The care and treatment of the person with a terminal illness must be consistent with the person's beliefs and cultural expectations.
10. Nurses have a responsibility to be aware of other conditions which may affect decision making by a person with a terminal illness, such as depression, other mental illness, dementia, or the effects of mood altering medicines.

11. Children and young people with a terminal illness should be informed and consulted and their wishes considered in any decisions made regarding their care and treatment. These decisions should be regularly reviewed together with the child or young person with the terminal illness and their selected family members.
12. Nurses and assistants in nursing (however titled) caring for the person with a terminal illness must be informed about the person's wishes and expectations in relation to their care and treatment.
13. The care of the person with a terminal illness is enhanced if all health professionals involved in their care know the outcome of discussions specific to their care and treatment between the person and their treating medical practitioner, or another health professional. The outcome of these discussions should be appropriately documented and updated at regular intervals, and be available to other health professionals involved in the person's care.
14. Discussions with the person with a terminal illness and their family in relation to the initiation of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and other life extending measures should be part of the management plan and the outcome of those discussions clearly documented.
15. People with a terminal illness have the right to access specialist palliative care services. These include controlling pain, relieving other symptoms of disease and providing emotional and psychosocial support in preparation for death. Early referral to palliative care services should be available to all persons with a terminal illness.
16. Employers should provide the necessary resources to support nurses in dealing with the professional and emotional issues rising from caring for a person with a terminal illness.
17. People with a documented Advanced Care Directive should communicate their wishes to health professionals involved in their care, including specialist Palliative Care Services. Nurses should respect the wishes of people with Advanced Care Directives.

endorsed June 1998

reviewed and re-endorsed February 2005

reviewed and re-endorsed May 2008

reviewed and re-endorsed June 2011

¹ The person's *family* is decided by the person themselves and may include a wide network of friends, for example.