

A study of Paediatric Palliative Care Nursing

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand,
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Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work.
It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination
at this or any other university

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Abstract

Paediatric palliative care is an area that is still in its infancy, especially in South Africa, in terms of both research and facilities that offer such specialised and specific care. This study sought to examine both the scope of paediatric palliative care; as well as the possible impact that working in paediatric palliative care may have on a group of nursing staff working in the context of HIV/Aids in Gauteng, South Africa.

A self developed, semi-structured interview was used. The sample comprised of seven paediatric palliative nurses working at The Soweto Hospice and Cotlands Baby Sanctuary. The results of this study found that the scope of paediatric palliative care was not clearly defined. As a result, nurses' roles and responsibilities tended to merge with other members of the multidisciplinary team. Furthermore, it was evident that no standardised or specialised training exists. As a result, nurses tended to use their instinctual mothering or parenting experiences. This, along with cultural beliefs, led nurses to employ a protecting role and as such, often resulted in restrictive communication. Together, these issues seemed to result in the blurring of professional boundaries. Nurses experienced both a positive and negative impact from their job. Nurses attempted to cope with the impact through self-care, social support and institutional support. The ways in which nurses dealt with this impact had implications for the individual nurse, their patients and the institution. These results showed the need for more ongoing training and emotional support for paediatric palliative nurses.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE NUMBER</u>
1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Rationale	3
1.2 Aim	4
1.3 Structure of Report	4
2: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 The Scope of paediatric palliative care	6
2.2 The impact of paediatric palliative care on nurses	16
3: METHODS	30
3.1 Research Questions	30
3.2 Research Design	30
3.3 Participants	30
3.4 Procedure	31
3.5 Instrumentation	32
3.6 Data Analysis	32
3.7 Ethical Considerations	34
4: RESULTS	35
4.1 The scope of paediatric palliative care nursing	35
4.2 The impact of paediatric palliative care on nurses	43
5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	51
5.1 Limitations of the Study	60
5.2 Recommendations	61
5.3 Conclusion	62
6: REFERENCE LIST	64
7: APPENDICES	73
7.1. Appendix A: Participant information sheet	73
7.2. Appendix B: Consent form 1	74
7.3. Appendix C: Consent form 2	75
7.4. Appendix D: Possible interview questions	76

7.5. Appendix E: Institution consent form	77
7.6. Appendix F: Institution consent form	78
7.7. Appendix G: Letter requesting institutional permission to conduct research	79
7.8. Appendix H: Medical ethics clearance certificate	80