

Holly Huling  
Scholarship Essay

Although my clinical experience has been somewhat limited due to my stage of career development, I have found that working in a geriatric center with aging adults provided several memorable clinical opportunities. It enlightened me about the special needs of people at this developmental stage. The importance of human contact for the elderly was very obvious in the center. Often many of these people had few visitors because family and relatives had passed away or they were unable to visit because of other responsibilities. The patients always appreciated someone taking an extra minute to talk with them or giving them a gentle touch on their hand.

Recently we learned about the spirituality aspect of nursing. We learned that a nurse should look at the holistic view of patients when caring for them. The holistic view includes spirituality, which according to Mauk & Schmidt (as cited in Potter & Perry, 2006), "is an awareness of one's inner self and a sense of connection to a higher being, nature, or to some purpose greater than oneself" (p. 509). Potter & Perry (2006) noted that a patient's well-being greatly depends on the balance between multiple variables, including spiritual factors. This semester I cared for a patient who made me realize the importance of this perspective.

The center I worked in was a long and short term care facility where the elderly came to either live or they came for rehabilitation and then returned home. Recently, a fellow student and I were caring for an elderly woman who had been in the center for a few weeks. When completing a thorough assessment of her physical and psycho/social status, we found a few very important things that we could assist her with. One was

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particularly significant to the patient. When talking to the patient about values and beliefs that were important to her she stated that she was catholic and enjoys going to mass every Tuesday. She was very disappointed that while in the facility she was not able to attend mass and fulfill her spiritual needs. Realizing how meaningful this was for her, a fellow student and I asked if she would like to visit with the facility's chaplain. We called the chaplain and made a referral for her to speak with the patient. After the chaplain visited with the woman, she shared with us that this was an excellent referral.

This experience made me realize how much spirituality can impact a person's life. If spirituality is not looked at by the nurse it can adversely affect a person's health status. On the other hand if a nurse makes this a priority the patient may have an easier recovery. I look forward to further developing my professional career and experiencing similar events that demonstrate the importance of what nursing is all about. That is, caring for patients across the lifespan from a holistic perspective.

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Reference

Potter, P.A., & Perry, A.G. (2006). *Basic nursing: Essentials for practice*, (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). St.

Louis, MO: Mosby Elsevier.