

End of Life + Beginning of Clinical = Better Together

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IMPETUS

The new AACN Essentials challenged us to incorporate all spheres of care across the curriculum resulting in expanding clinical rotations in hospice/palliative/supportive care.

Beginning nursing students are assigned a rotation at an inpatient hospice care facility within weeks of starting the nursing program. A senior nursing student is assigned to the site as part of a peer assisted learning model, providing pre- and post-briefing under the guidance of faculty as well as having a precepted experience working with an RN.



Photo Caption: WCU ABSN students

"My favorite part of this experience was having the privilege of being a small part of the individualized care that each patient received, and working with a CNA who took it as her life's mission to provide such care, meticulously and with joy!" -1st semester ABSN Student

CLINICAL OBJECTIVES

1st Semester Students

- **Tangible skills:** Students focus on personal care activities (bathing, bed changes, toileting) working alongside staff CNA personnel.
- **Power skills:** Students practice interpersonal communication, professionalism, and demonstrating empathy with care and compassion.

4th Semester Students

- **Tangible Skills:** Students provide direct holistic patient-centered care in the hospice environment working alongside staff RN personnel.
- **Power skills:** Students provide mentorship and leadership to 1st semester students. This activity was paired with a leadership course assignment.

MAPPING TO AACN ESSENTIALS

- 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 2.9, 3.3, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.1, 7.2, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2, & 10.3 all contain relevant sub competencies
- CARES, ELNEC UG Curriculum Competencies 1-15

"The process of death is uncomfortable to think about because of the uncertainty around it. While at clinical today, one of the patients I was caring for passed away while I was in the room. It was inspiring to see how the nurse I was precepting cared for the patient, and ensured the patient's wife was able to sit with the patient as he passed.

After checking for a heartbeat, the nurse delivered the news to the wife delicately and with such care the moment was peaceful, even with it being so heartbreaking.

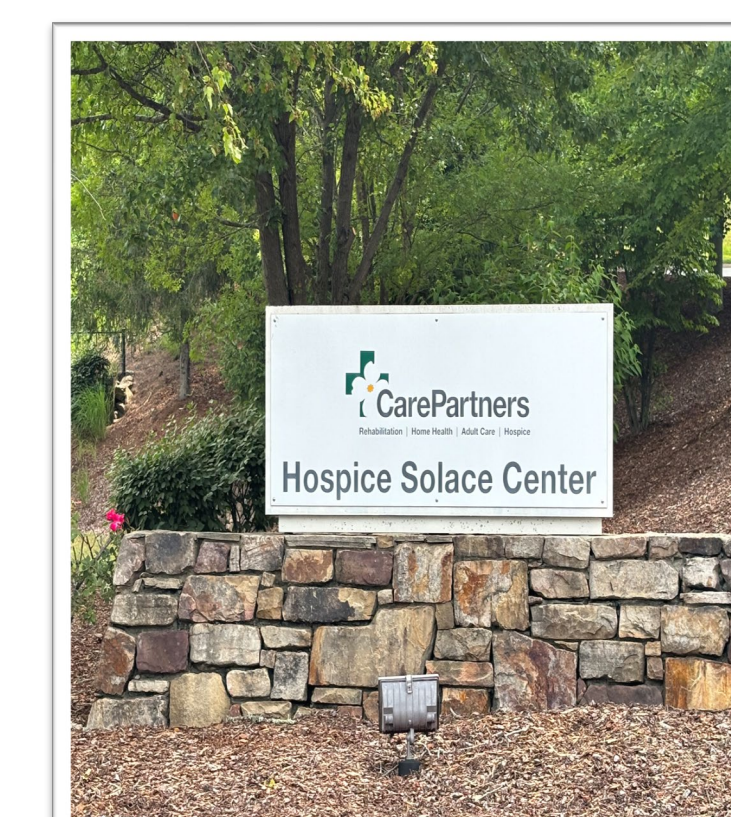
This experience has helped remove the fear and uncertainty that surrounds death and accept it as a natural part of life. It also reminds me of how important it is to handle these situations with care and grace as it is a very difficult and life changing moment in the family's life.

SETTING



Photo Caption: CarePartners Hospice Solace Center located in Asheville, NC

CarePartners Solace Center is a 27-bed inpatient facility that provides care to individuals of all ages providing respite care, general inpatient care, and transitional care. The facility is located on a campus setting along with an inpatient rehabilitation center.



LOGISTICS

- Clinical rotational schedule was developed with one 4th semester student assigned to hospice on the same day as 1st semester students.
- The 4th semester student was scheduled for a 6-hour rotation (7-1pm) as part of Medical-Surgical clinical rotation.
- The 1st semester students were scheduled for a 3-hour rotation (7-10 am or 10-1p) as part of the Foundations clinical rotation.
- Faculty were available for support but in a nearby building. Periodic check-ins were made.
- Site specific journal prompts were developed to encourage reflection.

4th Semester Students

- Connected with 1st semester students via email to plan meeting place/time.
- Led a pre-briefing session onsite.
- Found charge nurse to facilitate 1st semester student assignment with CNA and own assignment with RN for the day.
- Led the post-rotation debrief session with faculty support.

REFLECTIONS

1st Semester Students

- **Hands-on practice** of newly acquired personal care skills in a supportive non-rushed environment.
- Differentiated between **curative and care-based** approach.
- Direct exposure to **compassionate and therapeutic nursing** techniques (e.g. The power of human touch, being present).

"One of the things that I appreciated most about this experience was the family-supported model of care being implemented. As much compassion was offered to families as to patients. Losing a loved one is an incredibly challenging time for families, and I believe it's imperative that we as healthcare professionals acknowledge that and provide them with the necessary education, resources, comfort, and care."
 -1st semester ABSN Student

4th Semester Students

- Realized the **wealth of knowledge** and skills obtained in the program resulting in increased confidence and self-efficacy.
- **Applied leadership principles** and skills learned in the classroom in a real-world environment.
- Returned to a **familiar clinical site** with additional skillsets. Full-circle experience.

"Learning from peers is a great addition to the nursing school curriculum. It builds relationships between cohorts, and it allows 4th semester students to see how far they've come in a short time, and it allows 1st semester students to see that the program is doable!" -4th Semester ABSN Student

Faculty

- Students are afforded a **supported experience** in a hospice setting with minimal faculty workload demands.
- Opportunities to **apply assessment content** and deepen awareness of nuanced clinical presentations (breathing patterns, cachexia, signs of dying)
- **Normalizing palliative/hospice care** to reduce anxiety and increase familiarity
- Welcoming and **safe learning environment** appropriate for a variety of levels of learners.
- Engagement in a **peer assisted learning** model.

