Hospice Reflection

My hospice experience took place at the Alex City Alacare. Alacare is a home health organization that goes and visits people that are on hospice at their house. I think this type of hospice, compared to a hospice facility, is better because the patient gets to stay at home where they are most comfortable and have as many family members as they want by their side at all times. This type of hospice promotes autonomy and patient self-determination because there is not a nurse there at all times to help them. I saw autonomy and self-determination when we discharged a lady from hospice for failure to thrive. This made me feel proud because she, along with her son and the hospice nurse, were able to turn her situation around. I also saw self-determination when we visited a lady that had gotten septic shock from a tube feeding going into her subcutaneous area. We were there changing the dressing on the side of her stomach, and when we would tell her how good it was healing she would cry out ‘halleluiah’ and ‘glory glory’. It was so cute and funny, but at the same time really showed she was excited and determined to get better.

There are definitely some hindrances when it comes to home hospice. There are more falls because the family does not have the means to watch the patient at all times. Another hindrance would be too many family members present in small house or family members that do not know a lot about what is going on, and therefore cannot relay vital information about how the patient has been doing or accurately care for the patient.

We went to one house because the tech called and said the patient could possibly be having a stroke. When we got there, there were about eight people there. It was really hard to get in and assess the patient because the house was so small. On top of that, there was stuff
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Piled everywhere like they were on an episode of hoarders. It did not seem fit to be caring for a dying patient. The family had to decide whether to take the patient to the ER or keep her at home. They decided to take her to the ER and she was admitted. Two days later when we met with them again, we found out that they had put an NG tube in the patient. They were currently trying to decide where to go from there. The daughter of the patient was very persistent in the fact that she wanted her mom to go back home. We were trying to explain to her that caring for her mom at home would not likely be an option because the caregiver was in her 70’s and the patient was total care now. This was really upsetting to her, and she had a hard time understanding. This made me feel really sad because I could 100% understand why she would want her dying mother to die at home rather than in a long term care facility, but it just would not be physically possible.

This patient and family required the interdisciplinary team of the RN and the social worker when it came to deciding where to take the patient from the hospital. The RN was there to explain the nursing side of the problem. She told them why it would be extremely hard to care for the patient at home, and she also named some rehabilitation facilities that were partnered with Alacare so that they could continue care. The social worker was there to explain the financial side to all the options they had. With the information and moral support of the team, the family decided to take the patient to 21 days of rehabilitation at a facility that was partnered with Alacare.

The saddest part of my hospice experience was when we went to a house call because a patient with stomach cancer was severely declining. The family explained that the day before the patient was completely responsive and alert and when we got there he was talking crazy,
very lethargic, and grabbing the air. It was so sad seeing all the family there crying. I couldn’t help but to cry with them because it reminded me of when I saw my great grandmother die at the nursing home two years ago. I was for sure we would die within the next two days because he was showing all of the same signs as my great grandmother, but two days later when we went back to see him he was sitting up alert and talking like normal with no memory of that day. I learned a lot from this hospice experience, and it really opened my eyes to how important it is to have great hospice nurses because they are there at a time when families need the most support, care, and information.