Journal Watch

Long-term palliative care workers: More than a story of endurance.
Webster J, Kristjanson LJ. *J of Palliative Medicine 2002*; 5(6): 865-875.

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Abstract:

This study explored the stories of long-term palliative care workers to generate an understanding of their experiences of working in palliative care for an extended period of time. Six health professionals participated in the study, all of whom were currently working in a palliative care service and had been working continuously in palliative care services for a minimum of 5 years. Descriptions of their experiences provided insight into the reasons for choosing this work, the stages they went through along the way, and the factors that sustain and challenge them as they continue to work in the area. Five phases in the trajectory of working in palliative care were described: The Awakening, Making the Connection, Committing to the Philosophy, Reaping the Rewards, and Soldiering On. Results from this study may be helpful to educators and administrators who endeavour to develop and support this workforce. Furthermore, the descriptions provided in this study may provide direction for individuals working in palliative care who may be called on to reflect on their own work trajectory and their commitment to the field.

Comments:

Strengths/uniqueness:
This is a well-designed and well-described qualitative study exploring in detail the experience of veteran palliative care workers. Well-chosen vignettes from the participants enhance the report.

Weaknesses:
These are acknowledged in the report and include dependence on recall over a one hour interview, and uncertainty in regard to whether new palliative care workers in a different time and stage of development of palliative care, would identify similar experiences.

Relevance to Palliative Care:
This is an interesting report for individual palliative care workers to do self-reflection, and identify their own stage of development and satisfaction with their current palliative care careers. Some reports from other cultures and countries would be useful additions to this literature.