

Empathy in Palliative Care

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End-of-Life time

- End of Life is a multifaceted process
- characterised by a series of losses
- irreversible, imposed upon the patient
- functional status gradually declines
- objective nature of loss transfers into a subjective experience, suffering;
- the meaning of loss for the individual is evaluated by emotional loss;

(David Mackintosh HNZ conference 2008)

Care and Empathy

- 'The delivery of adequate care is partially dependant on understanding and responding to that experience' (Mackintosh, 2008).
- Developing empathy is a crucial attribute for health professionals



What is 'empathy'?

- 'empathy is the capacity to enter the subjective world of another' (Janssen, Macleod and Walker, 2008).
- Janssen et al describe 'empathy' as having affective and cognitive components (2008)
- An exercise of awareness of self and losses before empathy for other is enhanced;
- key to a caring practitioner –patient relationship.



References

- Janssen, A., Macleod, R. & Walker, S. (2008). Recognition, reflection and role models: Critical elements in education about care in medicine. *Palliative and Supportive Care*, 6 p 389 – 395.
- Mackintosh, D. (2008) Palliative Care: Loss, empathy and opera. *Hospice New Zealand Conference*, Palmerston North.

