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Impact of a Volunteer Companion Program on Nursing Students' Knowledge and Concerns  
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**Background:** Deficiencies in end-of-life education may explain nursing students' reports of feeling anxious and unqualified to care for dying patients. A volunteer Palliative Care Companion program was developed to provide undergraduate nursing students with an experiential learning opportunity by spending time with dying patients and their families.

**Objective:** To evaluate the impact of the Palliative Care Companion program on nursing students' knowledge, attitudes, and concerns about providing palliative care, and to describe companion students' volunteer activities.

**Design:** Quasiexperimental controlled pretest-posttest design.

**Setting/subjects:** Fifty-two undergraduate nursing students (32 companion students, 20 controls) at a midwestern U.S. university with an affiliated hospital-based palliative care service.

**Measurements:** All participants completed the Palliative Care Quiz for Nurses, Attitudes Toward Palliative Care, and Concern About Caring for Dying Patients questionnaires at the beginning and end of the semester. Companion subjects also kept a journal describing their palliative care experiences.

**Results:** Attitude scores were not analyzed because of poor internal consistency of the questionnaire. Changes in scores on knowledge items did not reach significance. Concern scores decreased significantly from pretest to posttest in the companion group. After adjusting for pretest concern score, there was a trend toward lower concern score in the companion group compared to controls ( $p = 0.07$ ). Companion students' journals described activities including visiting patients, viewing end-of-life videos, attending educational and public lectures, independent reading, and making bereavement phone calls to family members.

**Conclusions:** The Palliative Care Companion program did not produce significant improvements in knowledge and concerns compared to controls, but companion students described their participation as a meaningful learning experience.