

Publication

Being in the hospital : an interpretive phenomenological study of terminally ill cancer patients' experiences

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This article describes a study exploring terminally ill cancer patients' experiences of being in hospital and the meanings patients assigned to the hospital as their temporary residence. Ten patients and their closest family members participated in this interpretive phenomenological study during the patients' hospitalization. Data were collected in a public tertiary hospital in Switzerland. Patients' care was observed and participants were interviewed repeatedly. Data analysis included thematic analysis as well as searching for paradigm cases and exemplars. Patients described their existence in the hospital on a continuum from "prison" to "heaven." For most of their stay, patients occupied some place between these extremes and could be called "guests of necessity" who accepted the hospital as necessity but were longing for home. The quality of hospital life was not constant rather, patients' experiences were transitory and some faded away. The study revealed an aspect hitherto undescribed in the literature: patients' experiences of the hospital as a temporary residence. Its findings can heighten health care professionals' awareness of patients' experiences. Recognizing patients' perspectives regarding the hospital as their temporary living place will allow professionals to individualize patient care.

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