Social Research Methods in Dementia Studies
John Keady, Lars-Christher Hydén, Ann Johnson et al (Eds)
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This is an excellent, fascinating and highly accessible read on spirituality in hospice care for professionals in health and social care and the wider public. It presents rich and creative narratives on spiritual interactions with patients and families from a diverse range of experienced hospice healthcare professionals and volunteers.

The authors draw on a variety of research, arts and philosophical literature to demonstrate how spirituality is more than religiosity or an organised agenda of faith.

The book demonstrates how spirituality in hospices and end of life care is a diverse experience that is mysterious, esoteric and often difficult to describe. Particularly poignant is a description of how hospice staff and volunteers create as a compassionate and supportive community through attention, humility, silence and connectedness, and demonstrate how spirituality is a fundamental part of being human.

I highly recommend this book to any professional or lay person who is interested in spirituality and end of life care and hospice practice.

Reviewed by Kay de Vries, professor of older people's health, De Montfort University, Leicester

Pushing the boat out in end of life care

Respecting people's decisions at the end of life can make all the difference to their care.

While I was on placement in an acute setting I had the pleasure of caring for a 65-year-old man who I will call Tom.

Tom had oesophageal varices and had been admitted to the ward because his condition was worsening.

At first, he could speak and we had conversations ranging from his favourite food to boats and the weather. I asked Tom if he would like to move rooms where he could see the boats and the sea. ‘Maybe next time,’ he replied.

Tom’s family heard this conversation and said they would speak to Tom again about being moved. Apparently, Tom had turned down the move because he thought I would be too busy to arrange it.

Tom agreed to being moved to a room with a sea view and later that day I made this possible for him.

He was unable to speak by this point so I turned his bed to face the window and raised it so that he could see the waves and the birds.

Tom died a few days after he was moved. He had an advance directive in place that stated he wanted to be dressed in the uniform of the Royal Air Force aerobatic team, the Red Arrows.

Placement experience

I fulfilled his wish and, while doing so, I spoke to him about the boats and the weather. I finished by combing his hair and telling him how smart he looked.

This placement experience taught me the importance of respecting advance directives and giving patients who are at the end of life a choice to die in a more relaxed and peaceful setting.

Caring for patients with respect and dignity at the end of life and after death are just as important.