



A Summary Of

Title: [Complexity of Nurse Practitioners' Role in Facilitating a Dignified Death for Long-Term Care Home Residents during the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2021.](#)

Authors: Shirin Vellani, Veronique Boscart, Astrid Escrig-Pinol, Alexia Cumal, Alexandra Krassikova, Souraya Sidani, Nancy Zheng, Lydia Yeung, and Katherine S. McGilton



Keywords

Palliative Care • Dementia • Long-Term Care • COVID-19 • Death • Nurse Practitioners



Research Questions

- How can nurse practitioners help to create a dignified death for people in long-term care?
- How can they do this while facing the pressures related to the COVID-19 pandemic?



Why is this important?

Nurse practitioners and long-term care homes can work as one to create better end-of-life experiences for people.

Have Questions? Contact Ellen at ellen.snowball@uhn.ca.



Context

People reside in **long-term care homes** closer to the end of their life. They tend to have medical conditions, higher levels of frailty and complex care needs.

Promoting **a good death** is an important goal of palliative and end-of-life care. This includes:

- preventing distress in a dying person and their family
- honouring the wishes of the dying person and their family
- following clinical, cultural, and ethical principles

COVID-19 pandemic: a large percentage of deaths were among long-term care home residents. Deaths ranged from 8% in South Korea, 39% in the United States to 69% in Canada.

● **A Good Death**

Characterized by:

- advanced care planning and goals of care discussions
- pain and symptom management at the end-of-life
- sombre care after death

● **Barriers to a Good Death**

Including:

- chronic staff shortages
- forced isolation (due to COVID-19)
- limited or virtual presence of clinicians including physicians

● **Advanced Care Planning & Goals of Care Discussions**

Nurse practitioners connected with care partners for discussions. Especially when the residents appeared to be nearing end-of-life. During the pandemic, the need for these talks increased.

They also:

- organized virtual care meetings linking families with the care team and physicians
- regularly updated care partners especially when the residents were nearing end-of-life.

● **Pain & Symptom Management**

Including:

- optimizing emergency supplies and planning for emergencies
- prescribing medications in advance to aid end-of-life symptom management. Such as oxygen and pain medications
- consulting with expert clinicians where needed
- addressing psychosocial needs of residents and families

● **Care After Death**

Including:

- being present with the staff for the dignified care of residents' body
- informing the care partners of the death
- providing emotional support to staff and care partners
- adhering to pandemic related policy. For example, only allowing one grieving care partner at a time.



Conclusion

This study demonstrated that in close collaboration with the long-term care home staff and leaders, nurse practitioners played a vital role in promoting a dignified death for long-term care home residents while navigating the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.