

What is a good death? Terminally ill patients dealing with normative expectations around death and dying.

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What is a good death? Terminally ill patients dealing with normative expectations around death and dying

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Abstract

Objective

Developing good care for dying people is important nowadays. Normative expectations about what could be considered as a good death are inextricably bound up with this issue. This article aims to offer an insight in the way terminally ill patients talk about death and dying and how they refer to current western normative expectations about a “good” death.

Method

Thirteen patients with a life expectancy of less than 3 months living at home were interviewed about how they experienced the last phase of their lives. The analysis focused on the way patients tell their personal stories by using normative expectations

that are part of a broader cultural western framework.

Results

Five categories of normative expectations were discriminated in the stories of patients: awareness and acceptance, open communication, living one's life till the end, taking care of one's final responsibilities and dealing adequately with emotions.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that in the search of a good death people show a clear diversity in their way of referring to as well as in dealing with normative expectations that are part of the current cultural paradigm.

Practice implications

Professional caregivers should be responsive to how a patient deals with and relates to normative expectations about a good death and should support patients in their individual process of dying an "appropriate death".



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Keywords

Palliative care; Good death; Normative expectations

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