

Eastern Traditions versus Western Beliefs as Related to the Grief Process Regarding End-of-Life Care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Abstract

The field of neonatology continues to grow through research and technological advances that have allowed for the survival of the sickest or most premature baby. Despite the progression of neonatal abilities, death in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) continues to be a daily reality for parents and healthcare workers. Most Westernized NICUs have created specific bereavement protocols for the death of an infant aimed at assisting the parents of the deceased infant with successfully completing the grieving process. With the recent increase of immigrants from Eastern cultures, a controversy in neonatal care has arisen regarding how best to support and respect these Eastern cultures during end-of-life care without forcing Western ideals upon them. This paper explores the Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and Muslim cultures as related to how best to revere their rituals and traditions when death occurs in the hospital setting. By having a good working knowledge of these traditions, NICU healthcare workers can hopefully prevent the harmful complications associated with unresolved grief.