

## **Nurse family members: the call to care for our own relatives**

This presentation explores 'the call to care' as a central theme that emerged from my doctoral research on nurses caring for their own relatives in palliative care. The research explored the challenges of living well within families that make unique demands on their nurse family members. The methodological approach was informed by Foucault's ideas about how people strive to become ethical subjects through self-forming activities undertaken on the self in order to care for the self and others. It was conducted as a qualitative study with six female registered nurse participants from different geographical areas of New Zealand, who were interviewed about their experience of caring for their dying relative.

Nurses are called to care because they are present within their families with knowledge and expertise that makes a difference to how a dying relative experiences palliative care. Caring discourse positions nurses with responsibilities to their own; responsibilities that require sensitivity in knowing how to negotiate the relational spaces that constitute relationships with other family members and health professionals. Family discourse calls nurse family members to care as daughters, wives or mothers within normative understandings about the obligations that families have to care for their ill or dependent members. Expertise, in knowing as a nurse, positions nurse family members as interpreters of information and observers who watch over the ill person's clinical care. This expertise, which becomes visible in the exercise of professional authority, challenges the normative frameworks that classify and demarcate professional and lay role in palliative care.

### **Key words:**

Nurse family member, the call to care, care of the self, normative frameworks