Pre-death dreams and visions: The psychological and spiritual value of working with end-of-life phenomena

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Abstract
Innovations in research methodology, education or clinical practice.

Background and Description: End-of-life experiences such as pre-death dreams, waking visions and death-bed encounters are phenomenal experiences that have been well documented throughout history and across cultures for thousands of years, and their impact on dying individuals and their loved ones known to be profoundly meaningful. Phenomenal experiences commonly occur upon awakening between sleeping and waking, as well as in the waking state in the weeks and days prior to death.

These experiences are underreported and underemphasized in hospice and palliative care and undervalued within scientific and medical communities. In the modern medical world, such experiences tend to be given wide berth. As a result, these important and deeply spiritual experiences which carry significant clinical, educational and therapeutic implications are largely unexplored in clinical literature, education and practice.

The aim of this presentation, therefore, is to open out a greater understanding of these experiences, clinically, educationally and therapeutically. Recent research findings, along with phenomenological descriptions of end-of-experiences, I have been granted permission to use, will be drawn upon to help aid and deepen this understanding.

Impact and Implications: When confronted with death—death dreams (transpersonal and archetypal in nature) frequently come forth through which messages and symbolic representations of death are transmitted. These dreams carry a predictive value given their precognitive nature and reflective qualities that indicate the closeness of death approaching. This special category of dreams, therefore, carries an important function: to help prepare psychologically and spiritually for death, thus, helping facilitate peaceful deaths.

Conclusion: In coming to understand the psychological and spiritual value of pre-death dreams and visions, the barriers to understanding end-of-life phenomena and their clinical value will be addressed, and a more holistic approach and assessment offered, in the hope of integrating these important experiences into future models of hospice care.