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Moments of Birth and Death – A Personal Journey

Janette O Sullivan

Kingsborough Community College, USA

The care that nurses and midwives render to those who are dying and those who are laboring towards giving birth has many similarities. As an oncology nurse, I have assisted women (and men) when they were at the end of their lives. As a nurse-midwife, I have taken care of many women and attended their births. Being present at the beginning and the end of life is an honor beyond words. My work as a nurse-midwife prepared me well for caring for my mother at the end of her life. One of the hallmarks of midwifery care is non-intervention – to honor and support the process as long as there is normalcy. Support at the end of life includes honoring the wishes of the dying person and offering support and palliative care.

Biography:

Janette O Sullivan became a registered nurse in 1984 and worked for five years in oncology. She had a strong interest in maternity and completed her nurse-midwifery training at Columbia University in 1992. She has worked in hospitals in NYC and in an out-of-hospital birth center. For ten years she had a private practice with a midwife in Brooklyn, NY. I teach Nursing at Kingsborough Community College.