



The Growing Need for Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses in Home Health and Hospice

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As a nurse educator, consultant, and psychiatric-mental health nurse supporting healthcare organizations across the country, I have observed the growing need for psychiatric-mental health nursing expertise in both home health and hospice settings—a need also supported in the literature (Ohlsen et al., 2022; Soares et al., 2025). More than one in five adults (59.3 million) live with a mental illness and 15.4 million adults experience serious mental illness in the United States (NIH, 2024). Patients with at least two long-term medical conditions are seven times more likely to develop depression than those without (Ohlsen et al., 2022).

Despite being a cost-effective option for managing psychiatric conditions, home care—or “home treatment”—was unfamiliar to half of self-referring patients and 80% of healthcare professionals (Mötteli et al., 2022). When there is a lack of understanding about available services, referrals may be missed or delayed for patients who could benefit from home care. The stigma surrounding mental illness is another factor potentially influencing the type of care and treatment patients receive (Dobransky, 2020; Fantuzzi et al., 2025).

It is just as necessary to support and manage one's mental health as their medical condition(s). Psychiatric-mental health nurses have experience caring for various populations that eventually will require end-of-life care. It is essential to comprehend the impact of mental illness on one's quality of life and to develop patient-centered care (Riley & Hupcey, 2022). End-of-life care for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness should consider a range of influencing factors, including gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, symptom burden, veteran status, and environmental issues (Riley & Hupcey, 2022).

While a patient's need for home health or hospice is most often related to a primary medical concern, their psychiatric-mental health disorders require just as much attention. Psychiatric-mental health nurses are needed in home health and hospice settings. When developing nurse residency programs for hospice and home health nurses, it is essential to consider how nurses will address and manage mental health concerns among various patient populations. The

psychiatric-mental health nurse educates and serves as a resource for other care team members and also provides direct patient care. Yet it is uncommon to see mental health management incorporated into home health and hospice training despite supportive models of care delivery such as hospital-at-home programs, which can focus on the management of mental health concerns in the home setting (Soares et al., 2025). Skills possessed by psychiatric nurses are unique (Ohlsen et al., 2022). They are experts in therapeutic communication (both verbal and non-verbal), de-escalation, teaching coping strategies and resilience, psychotropic medication management and education, identification of safety concerns, and navigating family dynamics (Soares et al., 2025). These skills are particularly valuable in home care and hospice settings, not only due to the rise in mental health concerns but also because agency outcome measurements also include mood and behavioral outcomes. ■

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