

# Knowledge Network Project News:

## August 2005 Update

### ***Status of the project***

The report on a model and business plan for a Knowledge Network in palliative care in Australia was completed and presented to the Department of Health and Ageing last December. Flinders University undertook the project work in developing this report using research staff and specialist advisors to assist with financial, legal and marketing aspects. The report has resulted in a series of discussions on the role of such a Network and what steps would be needed next in moving towards such a Network.

To support further progress while reviewing the resource implications and value of such a Network, the Department of Health and Ageing has requested that the CareSearch project team look at several issues related to a Knowledge Network. This work has two aspects – (1) several investigations and reviews around management and content and (2) pilot activities within the CareSearch website. Details on each aspect are described below. These investigations and the development of trial resources will be carried out in the period till June 2006.

### ***Knowledge Network Management Group***

The Knowledge Network Management Group established last year will continue. Members of that group have kindly agreed to continue in the role till June 2006. The first teleconference has been held and a face to face meeting is being planned for the near future.

### ***Project Investigations:***

#### **Governance and location**

In the final report to the Department of Health and Ageing, the need for ownership and uptake of the Network by the palliative care community was highlighted. For the Network to succeed, those working in the field and affected by palliative care will need not only to use the resources but also to be active partners in its development, management and evaluation. Where it is located, how it is run and its relationship to existing resources and processes need to be carefully examined. During the next three months there will be discussions about the most appropriate physical site for a possible network, its relationships to existing structures and its administrative organisation.

#### **Functional lexicon**

The capacity to find relevant information is fundamental to all aspects of the project. There is a need to have a common understanding about the boundaries of the areas of content for a Knowledge Network, a sensitivity to how users may describe or seek information, and a structure to outline the relationships between components to guide navigation and searching. Developing a functional lexicon for the project provides us with a mechanism to capture the content and operational fields for the Network.

#### **Integrated evidence schema**

Quality of the materials housed on a Knowledge Network would be fundamental to its successful operation as a resource for the palliative care community. Materials would need to be relevant and based on the best available

evidence. However, palliative care draws upon many disciplines and fields in its approach to care. Further a Knowledge Network would need to be useful to many different audiences not just specialist clinicians. An evidence schema that provides a basis for inclusion or non-inclusion in the Network and also reflects the diversity of academic and practice fields will be essential. This investigation will look at the evidence and information standards that would need to be applied in a Knowledge Network.

### ***Trial projects:***

#### **Specialist care pages**

The first of the trial projects relates to the development of additional content within the CareSearch website. A series of new pages are being developed to support patient care and palliative practice. These pages include aged care information, palliative medications, education and training opportunities, and research resources including grants. The first pages dealing with aged care and grants will be released to the website in mid September.

#### **Bulletin boards and SIGs**

In the final report presented last December, the opportunity to promote exchange and the development of communities within palliative care was raised. To investigate one on-line option, we are introducing a bulletin board/forum capacity within CareSearch. This will enable users to post comments and questions with a group email option. For open forums, the forum operator will moderate all items that are posted. This functional capacity may prove to be very useful for Special Interest Groups by providing a virtual bulletin board and meeting place. The forum/bulletin board capacity will be available from mid September.

#### **Research Directory**

Accessing the results of research and promoting current research contributes

to the strength of a discipline's knowledge base. Creating a directory of research projects will promote knowledge translation and assist in developing research communities in palliative care. A searchable database of research projects is currently being designed.

### ***Staying in touch with the Knowledge Network project***

While the early months of the project have been directed to developing and modifying functions within the CareSearch website, the next few months will see a much more active engagement in the project investigations. We are keen to encourage participation and would welcome contributions from the palliative care community. Your ideas, criticisms, and knowledge will help strengthen the outcomes of this project.

The Project News will be sent out bimonthly to all those who have requested a copy. From 6 September 2005 a new page on the Knowledge Network project will be available in the CareSearch website. This will include not only materials produced as part of the project but also some of the background documents that are informing developments.

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