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NEWSLETTER

PALLIATIVE CARE CURRICULUM FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Welcome to the fourth newsletter for the Palliative Care for Undergraduates Project (PCC4U).

The project in brief

The PCC4U project aims to promote and support the inclusion of palliative care education as an integral part of all medical, nursing and allied health undergraduate training, and ongoing professional development. The outcomes of this project will include the development of a set of educational resources for undergraduate courses and the identification of strategies to encourage the uptake of palliative care principles and associated educational resources within the tertiary education sector.

The project is an initiative of the Australian Government and is funded by the Department of Health and Ageing through the National Palliative Care Program.

Education resources developed

The development and piloting of interactive CD-ROM resources will be completed by the end of January 2005. The resources include scenarios around which learning activities are organised to facilitate the exploration of core principles and discipline specific competencies.

Draft of core principles completed

The draft 'Principles for Inclusion of Palliative Care in Undergraduate Curricula' has been developed from the extensive research and consultation undertaken in Component One of this project. The draft Principles document will be available on the project website at www.pcc4u.org under the 'Key Documents' section. We invite general comment from all interested parties by mid March 2005.

Palliative care learning resources for health professionals

Four learning modules form the basis of the educational material being developed to demonstrate the key elements of palliative care.

The topics covered in the modules are:

1. Principles of Palliative Care
2. Communicating with people with a life-limiting illness
3. Palliative assessment and intervention
4. Optimising function.

Each CD-based module is centred on the personal experience of the person with a life-limiting illness and their family, and provides learning opportunities to enable the development of core graduate capabilities.

Module One: Principles of palliative care

The learning activities presented in this module focus on students developing an understanding of the social and personal experiences of people with life-limiting illnesses and their families, and the core principles of palliative care. Three video segments introduce William, a 60-year-old man with colorectal cancer and his experiences through the disease process.



Scene from Module One

Module Two: Communicating with people with a life-limiting illness

The learning activities presented in this module provide students with an opportunity to broaden their knowledge and understanding of effective communication with people who have a life-limiting illness, their families and the care team. The video

segments focus on Michelle, a mother of two young children faced with a diagnosis of advanced breast cancer. It explores the various emotional, social and existential challenges faced by Michelle and her family and their interactions with various health professionals.

Module Three: Palliative assessment

The learning activities presented in this module aim to develop students' understanding of the principles of assessment and intervention for individuals who have a life-limiting illness across a variety of care settings.

The accompanying video segments tell the story of Herbert and his wife, self-funded retirees who usually escape the southern winter by travelling up north. Herbert was diagnosed with systolic heart failure five years ago and has Type II Diabetes. As his heart failure worsens, Herbert experiences a range of symptoms and clinical problems that need to be assessed and managed by health professionals involved in his care.

Module Four: Optimising function

The learning activities presented in this module aim to develop students' understanding of how to provide support and optimise physical, emotional and social functioning for people with a life-limiting illness and their families. In particular it focuses on issues of loss, negotiating goals of care, strategies for optimising function, and understanding the impact of care-giving. The accompanying video segments see Bob, currently married with two adult children, diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. He was working as an electrician but had to retire early. He discusses adjusting to his diagnosis and his frustration at his personal limitations and worsening physical and social functioning.

Consultative workshops planned for 2005

A series of state-based consultative workshops will be conducted across Australia in late February and early March. The purpose of the workshop component of the project is to promote awareness of and obtain feedback on the learning resources, as well as seek feedback from academic staff and the professional community about ways to support the uptake of the resources in existing undergraduate health courses.

Specifically, the state-based consultative workshops being held across Australia aim to:

- showcase the range of learning resources developed as part of this project and discuss how they might be used;
- highlight the Palliative Care Core Principles Paper and discuss strategies to support the inclusion of palliative care core concepts in undergraduate curricula; and
- obtain feedback on strategies to enhance the uptake of palliative care in existing and future curricula.

Please join us

We extend an invitation to all academic personnel and healthcare providers from all disciplines and representatives from relevant regulatory bodies and professional associations to attend the workshops. It is anticipated the duration of each workshop will be 90 minutes.

The workshops will be held in February and March in Brisbane, Sydney, ACT, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Perth, and Darwin. The venues, times and dates for each state are currently being finalised and will be placed on the project website. Your involvement in these groups is crucial and we invite you to register your interest by email to mupccp@qut.edu.au with the Subject Heading 'National Workshops'.

Project overview

There are three major components of the project. The first focuses on gathering data through research and consultation with key stakeholders to identify and describe issues and practice in undergraduate palliative care education for health professionals. This forms the basis of a draft set of principles for including palliative care in undergraduate curricula – these principles outline the core values, desirable graduate capabilities and principles for teaching and learning palliative care in undergraduate courses in the health professions.

The second component of the project facilitates the development of a set of

educational resources for undergraduate courses that will complement and demonstrate the application of the core principles for inclusion of palliative care in undergraduate education in the health professions.

The final component focuses on promoting the uptake of the principles and educational resources developed as part of the second component of this project within the tertiary education sector.

The following activities have been the focus of work to date:

Project Activities	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrative review of literature on issues and practice in palliative care education • Teleconferences with members of the Project Advisory Group and Project Team • Undergraduate Curricula Scoping Survey • Palliative Care Community Survey • Conducting 20 Focus Group discussions across the country • Development of a draft set of principles for including palliative care in undergraduate education • Invitation to Comment – the draft principles document is distributed to key stakeholders and placed on the project website for comment • Finalisation of the core principles document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Ongoing • Completed • Completed • Completed • In progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and piloting of educational resources • Integrative review of literature on strategies for facilitating uptake • Synthesising data collected from component 1 and 2 concerning uptake • Finalisation of uptake strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft available on pcc4u website for public comment. Comments to be submitted by mid March 2005. • To be completed after stakeholder feedback • CD ROM and piloting completed January 2005 • Completed • Competed • March 2005

TO COMMENT OR TO OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT www.pcc4u.org

OR PHONE MS DEBBIE PARKER, PROJECT MANAGER ON (07) 3864 3840.