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NEWSLETTER

PALLIATIVE CARE CURRICULUM FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Welcome to the fifth newsletter of the Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates (PCC4U) project. In this edition you will find an overview of activities of the previous phase of this project, details of each of the components and an update on project activities. You will also find profiles of two of the sites that are implementing the teaching and learning resources into their undergraduate curricula this semester.

The Project to Date

A core principles document titled *Principles for Including Palliative Care in Undergraduate Curricula* was developed during the previous phase of the PCC4U project. These principles were developed from:

- a systematic review of the literature
- a curriculum scoping survey of tertiary education providers from 23 Australian universities regarding the extent to which existing undergraduate curricula incorporate palliative care
- 20 focus groups conducted nationally with representation from all relevant disciplines and
- a survey of health professionals to identify desirable graduate attributes.

Palliative care curriculum resources were developed to apply these principles. The following resources were piloted and revised:

- an interactive CD-ROM (also available in DVD and video format)
- a facilitator guide for the CD-ROM / audiovisual resources
- an up-to-date resource compendium.

Strategies for promoting the inclusion of palliative care in undergraduate curricula were identified on the basis of feedback and the literature.



Barriers to the incorporation of palliative care into undergraduate curricula were also identified. The main barriers included:

- overcrowded curricula
- insufficient numbers of academic staff with palliative care expertise
- lack of a consistent approach to teaching palliative care
- limited teaching resources and
- insufficient networks between academics and clinical experts regarding palliative care curriculum design and delivery.

Strategies were recommended for incorporating these core principles into undergraduate curricula and for overcoming barriers to inclusion in undergraduate courses.

A related document, *'Principles for Including a Palliative Approach to Aged Care in Undergraduate Nursing Curricula'*, has also been developed in a separate project funded by the Department of Health and Ageing.

The project in brief

The PCC4U project is an initiative of the Australian Department of Health and Ageing through the National Palliative Care Program that aims to promote inclusion of palliative care education as an integral part of all medical, nursing and allied health undergraduate training.



Components of the Implementation Phase

The current phase of the PCC4U project consists of six components for implementing, promoting and evaluating the palliative care resources.

1. Facilitate integration of resources in undergraduate curricula through implementation sites

The teaching and learning resources will be incorporated into the undergraduate curricula of medical, nursing and allied health courses from the following universities during first semester 2006:

- Charles Sturt University (Albury/Wodonga campus) – Bachelor of Nursing
- James Cook University, Townsville – Bachelor Nursing Sciences, Bachelor of Pharmacy
- Monash University – MBBS, Bachelor of Nursing
- University of Newcastle – Bachelor of Speech Pathology, Bachelor of Social Work
- University of New South Wales – MBBS
- University of Queensland – MBBS
- Queensland University of Technology – Bachelor of Nursing

Each site has completed a curriculum mapping exercise to identify the most effective methods for integrating palliative care within their curricula and to tailor and incorporate the resources to fit their existing course structures. Implementation sites will also assist in promoting the resources, implementation strategies and outcomes.

2. Promote ongoing networks and partnerships in undergraduate palliative care education

Mechanisms for facilitating the ongoing networking of academics with an interest in palliative care education will be identified through collaboration with the implementation sites, and consultation with a project advisory group and other key professional and regulatory bodies with an interest in palliative care education.

3. Evaluate the project outcomes and develop recommendations

The curriculum resources will be evaluated through measurement of outcomes across various levels. Students' attitudes, knowledge and skills regarding palliative care will be tested prior to and immediately after using the new resources. Teaching staff will provide feedback about the usefulness and effectiveness of the resources, and their confidence in using the resources. Feedback will also be sought from course coordinators and staff from within the palliative care community. Recommendations regarding future developments in undergraduate palliative care education will be made based upon the findings of this evaluation.

4. Oversee an implementation strategy to encourage uptake across the higher education sector

Relevant modifications and improvements will be made to the PCC4U resources based on feedback from the implementation sites. A broader promotional strategy will be implemented to encourage uptake of the amended resources across the higher education sector.

5. Secure endorsement from relevant bodies

Relevant professional bodies will be consulted in order to secure official endorsement for the resources and to identify future strategies for ensuring sustainability.

6. Develop and implement a strategy for incorporating uptake of 'Principles for Including a Palliative Approach to Aged Care' in Undergraduate Nursing Curricula

A separate project to support the implementation of the *Aged Care Content in Undergraduate Nursing Curricula: Principles Paper* has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.



Activities of Implementation Sites

Each pilot site that is participating in the implementation and evaluation of the curricula resources is conducting the following activities:

1. undertaking a mapping exercise to identify the most effective method for integrating palliative care within their curricula
2. tailoring and incorporating selected palliative care undergraduate curriculum resources to fit their existing course structures
3. conducting workshops or using other appropriate communication activities with academic and clinical teaching staff involved in delivering palliative care education in their course
4. trialling selected resources during first semester 2006
5. contributing data to a joint evaluation
6. participating in a national workshop to showcase the resources and outcomes
7. sharing implementation strategies with other academics with an interest in palliative care education.

Profile: James Cook University, Townsville

School of Nursing Sciences

The School has over 1100 students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Their undergraduate Bachelor of Nursing Science has approximately 700 students, and is offered in on-campus mode in Townsville and Cairns, mixed mode in Mount Isa, Thursday Island and Bamaga, and in distance learning mode. One of the School's priorities in incorporating the PCC4U learning resources is to explore the possibilities for using the resources in different teaching modes and across campuses. There are also plans to write new subjects for their undergraduate curriculum, and the pilot project materials will assist with this process.

The resources will be used in a combination of classroom, tutorial and self directed learning modes, and in three subjects:

- a first-year subject *Interactive Processes 1* will use some of the communication material
- a second-year subject *Nursing Inquiry – Law and Ethics* will use some of the legal and ethical aspects of the resources
- a third-year subject *Community Approaches to Care* will use community and team aspects of the resources

The School works closely with a palliative care clinical nurse consultant at the Townsville Hospital and will seek her input into, and evaluative feedback regarding, the use of the resources. They will also maintain communication with the School of Pharmacy at JCU Townsville regarding the implementation of materials within their respective curricula.



School of Pharmacy and Molecular Sciences

The School offers a Bachelor of Pharmacy and Bachelor of Pharmacy with Honours, and takes approximately 100–120 students per year. The PCC4U resources will be used in a fourth-year subject Oncology, Haematology and Toxicology for Pharmacists.

A combination of lecture, tutorial, workshop and self-directed learning will be used.

The main objective in using PCC4U resources will be to increase students' understanding of:

- psychosocial issues relating to palliative care for both patients and carers
- communication problems associated with palliative care
- symptomatology of terminal care and pharmacological and non-pharmacological strategies in controlling these symptoms.



Four core graduate capabilities

Four graduate capabilities have been identified as being integral for health professionals to provide a palliative approach to care for persons with a life-limiting illness:

1. Effective communication in the context of an individual's responses to loss and grief, existential challenges, uncertainty and changing goals of care
2. Appreciation of and respect for the diverse human and clinical responses of each individual throughout their illness trajectory
3. Understanding of principles for assessment and management of clinical and supportive care needs
4. The capacity for reflection and self-evaluation of one's professional and personal experiences and their cumulative impact on the self and others.

PROJECT – AT A GLANCE

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

Project Activities	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update integrative review of literature on issues and practice in palliative care education • Recruit implementation sites • Complete video editing and production • Finalise and print the facilitators' guide • Update resource compendium with 2006 prospectus • Establish a project advisory group • Promote ongoing networks and partnerships in undergraduate palliative care education • Oversee an implementation strategy to encourage uptake of resources across the higher education sector • Evaluate project outcomes and develop recommendations • Secure endorsement for the palliative care resources from relevant professional bodies • Final report to the Department of Health and Ageing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress • Completed • Completed • Completed • Completed • Ongoing • Ongoing • Ongoing • Ongoing • Ongoing • June 2006

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN OBTAINING FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT, PLEASE FEEL WELCOME TO VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT www.pcc4u.org OR PHONE THE PROJECT COORDINATOR, MS CHRIS BROOK, ON (07) 3864 8210.