



Issue No. 6 June 2006

NEWSLETTER

PALLIATIVE CARE CURRICULUM FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Project update

Welcome to the sixth edition of the PCC4U project newsletter. In this edition, you will find an update on project activities and profiles of four sites that have implemented the teaching and learning resources into their curricula: Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor of Speech Pathology at University of Newcastle; School of Nursing and Midwifery, Monash University; and School of Medicine, University of New South Wales.

Results of the project will be showcased at the PCC4U National Conference in Brisbane on 7th June 2006. The conference will be held at the new building of the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation on the Kelvin Grove campus of the Queensland University of Technology.

The teaching and learning resources were piloted at 10 sites in seven Australian universities. Implementation sites have worked hard to incorporate the resources during 1st semester this year. The tight time frames of the project have necessitated a considerable commitment from the implementation sites and the Project Team extends its sincere thanks to all who have contributed to its success.

The resources were incorporated into a total of 15 subject units through a variety of modes, including discussion of CD-ROM material within tutorials, didactic instruction during lectures and self-directed learning using the CD-ROM. The subjects selected represented nursing, medicine and allied health (pharmacy, speech pathology and social work). Each site performed a curriculum mapping exercise to identify the best methods to incorporate the resources into their existing curricula.

Prior to the implementation of the teaching and learning resources, students were surveyed regarding their baseline confidence about interacting with and managing care for people with life-limiting conditions, their views about death and dying, and their attitudes towards palliative care. After using the resources, students rated these factors again and provided feedback on the quality of the resources.

A small number of students from each

subject unit completed interviews to provide more in-depth information about their experiences with the teaching and learning resources. Teaching staff and course co-ordinators also provided interview feedback on the effectiveness of the resources and practical aspects of using the resources.

Next Steps...

The valuable feedback that this evaluation data provided was used to guide the revision and improvement of the teaching and learning resources.

Uptake of the resources will be promoted through a promotional strategy aimed at all providers of undergraduate health education in Australia and implementation sites will assist with the promotion of the undergraduate resources within their universities. Official endorsement of the teaching and learning resources and strategies for ensuring sustainability of the program will be negotiated with relevant professional bodies, such as the Committee of Deans of Australian Medical Schools and the Council of Deans of Nursing & Midwifery.

Please visit the PCC4U Web site at www.pcc4u.org if you would like further information.

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.



Implementation Site profiles

University of NSW, School of Medicine

The School of Medicine at UNSW has just embarked on a new undergraduate medical curriculum, providing an opportune time to develop uniform teaching resources and a consistent approach to palliative care teaching across the five clinical schools using multidisciplinary teaching teams.

Palliative care teaching staff include palliative care specialists, palliative care nursing staff, bereavement professionals and community palliative care teams.

Palliative care is predominantly taught in the Ageings and Endings modules 1 (1st and 2nd year students) and 2 (3rd and 4th year students). Ageings and Endings 1 allows students to explore and understand malignant and degenerative diseases using case-based scenario teaching in the format of lectures, tutorials, and individual and group assignments.

The main focus of our evaluation was a one week block within Ageings and Endings 2 (taught as an eight week block) titled 'Dying with cancer'. It is taught five times each year and integrates oncology, geriatric, rehabilitation and psycho-geriatric teaching topics. Lectures include Palliative Care – a multidisciplinary and symptom control approach, and

ethical and legal issues arising in the clinical care of patients late in their lives. Students follow through with a patient from a palliative care inpatient, community or acute care setting and our community palliative care clinical nurse consultants take students on a home visit. Students also attend a tutorial on grief and bereavement by bereavement counsellors and a bedside tutorial on the specific techniques of clinical evaluation of a patient with terminal illness. Tutorial sessions cover wide topics such as death and dying, advanced directives, prognostication, and practical aspects such as laying out of a deceased person. The week is brought together on the following Monday with a case method tutorial: End of life care – physical, psychological, communication and ethical issues.

The CD-ROM materials were an important resource for the lecturers in the preparation of lecture slides and the video provided useful talking points, especially for adding clinical content to 1st and 2nd year lectures. The CD-ROM was provided as a self-directed learning resource during the week of palliative care teaching and two of the video cases were worked through with a worksheet to promote interaction and discussion during tutorials. We conducted evaluations which assessed palliative care experiences of the 3rd and 4th year students prior to commencing the week of palliative care teaching and at completion.

Monash University, School of Nursing and Midwifery

The School of Nursing and Midwifery, Monash University, Peninsula campus is situated in a unique developing Health Sciences precinct. The School capitalised on this position to attract undergraduate participants from a range of Health Science disciplines into an extracurricular pilot site implementation of PCC4U. The entire program was offered as a combination of self-directed learning and four weekly tutorials.

Tutorials were conducted in the style of an interdisciplinary team meeting. Participants were provided with the PCC4U CD-ROM and three to four focus questions per module. They were instructed to prepare responses from their discipline-specific point of view and be prepared to contribute to the tutorial meetings.

For the undergraduate participants, the interdisciplinary forum proved to be the key to the success of the pilot. Each had the opportunity to explore palliative care from a range of perspectives, adding richness and depth to their learning. Undergraduate students rarely have the opportunity to appreciate the roles of other healthcare professionals during their studies; the chance to do so was highly valued by all.



University of Newcastle, Speech Pathology and Social Work

The School of Humanities and Social Science at The University of Newcastle incorporates a variety of humanities and social science disciplines, Social Work, and Speech Pathology. Dr Bernice Mathisen, from the Speech Pathology program, has been involved in the PCC4U project since appointment in 2004 as the Speech Pathology Association of Australia representative. Bernice welcomed the opportunity to implement the learning resources and invited Penny Crofts, Convenor of the Social Work program to participate, as these disciplinary groups commonly work together in clinical settings. This is the only PCC4U implementation site for these disciplines.

Speech pathology and social work share the four identified core graduate capabilities for palliative care practice:

- effective communication
- respect for human diversity
- understanding of assessment and management of care needs and
- the capacity for reflection and self-evaluation of one's professional and personal experiences.

The PCC4U learning resources were tailored to the respective programs to cater for the needs of their particular students. Speech pathology students were considered less likely to have prior knowledge or experience of palliative care, whereas social work students were likely to be more comfortable with the topic in general and to have had previous clinical experience.

The Speech Pathology program used a phased approach to implementation:

- 1st year students were involved in the Sensitisation phase which introduced the topic of palliative care to assure students that "it is OK to talk about death and dying"
- 2nd year students were involved in a Personalisation phase, where individual narratives were highlighted as part of the Cerebral Palsy component and
- 3rd year students participated in the Professionalisation phase exploring clinical experiences as part of the Dysphagia (swallowing disorders) component.

In social work, 4th year students' prior knowledge and skills of palliative care/thinking were extended in the Integration phase. Two intensive three hour workshops used a local social work palliative care practitioner, who presented scenarios focused on specific aspects of practice in settings where death and dying are core issues. The PCC4U resource material facilitated students' exploration of standards of practice in relation to these scenarios. Students worked in triads to explore the specific interpersonal skills involved in helping people with a life-limiting illness. Students' prior learning was complemented, consolidated and extended through the combination of:

- the prepared resources
- the disciplines-specific case scenarios
- the associated interaction with a palliative care social worker and
- the skills-based practice sessions.

Resource Compendium

One of the teaching and learning resources that was piloted at the implementation sites was a comprehensive list of relevant palliative care resources to support undergraduate students' learning. This Resource Compendium forms part of the PCC4U Resource Kit and will be updated periodically to include new resources as they become available.

The Resource Compendium includes professional and educational resources such as guidelines, frameworks, reports, textbooks, audiovisual resources and electronic resources (eg Web sites and search engines). It also includes resources from popular culture, such as books and popular literature, movies, audiovisual resources and electronic resources. Each resource is rated according to a four-star system of recommendation.



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 • 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 • 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 0411 607 471