PALLIATIVE CARE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULA

Report funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing through the Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduate Project
Overview of curriculum initiative

- Acceptable competence in palliative care important for all health professionals

- Physiotherapy education needs to generate practitioners skilled in palliative care.

- No consensus on physiotherapy entry level palliative care curriculum
Method

• Systematic literature review (2001-2008) of:
  - impact of palliative care teaching on student learning
  - palliative care curriculum topics
  - relevant learning objectives
  - relevant teaching methods
  - relevant educational resources

• Entry level physiotherapy program leaders surveyed regarding views on relevant content and educational methods
Results: Systematic review

- No palliative care education material specific for physiotherapy entry level programs identified

- Palliative care education starts (gently) early in program; challenges increase across course of study

- Course content should include grief and loss management, pain and symptom control, communication skills and development of coping skills for health professional’s emotional health

- Opportunities for IPE
Learning objectives need to address

Grief/Bereavement Issues

- Exploration of students own feelings/reactions/experiences
- Normal grief response
- Social and cultural differences
- Alter negative attitudes to a positive approach

Interdisciplinary Interaction

- Understanding roles/responsibilities and the value of each health discipline
- Build team relationships and team skills
- “Good” palliative care teamwork decreases stress on patient and family
Learning objectives need to address (cont.)

**Communication Training**

- Poor communication between health professional and patient affects quality of care and overall management of patient [Butler *et al.*, 2005; Dickinson, 2006]

**Management/ Care**

- Palliative care principles/concepts
- Pain and symptom control
- Psychological and Social Issues
Survey results

- Learning objectives of relevance to physiotherapy students were compiled

- Substantial opportunities for strengthening and standardising learning objectives identified

- Opportunity for sharing resources identified
Outcomes

- Teaching methods appropriate for achieving objectives summarised in report
- Resources for sharing assembled
- Learning objectives shared across programs through Council of Deans of Physiotherapy