Allied health professionals’ palliative care clinical & education needs

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National Allied Health Conference, 2017
Family rule of thumb

What sort of palliative care skills do you want from an AH clinician looking after you or your family when the time comes…

And it will come for all of us…
Overview

• Background & research questions
• Methods & analysis
• Findings
  - demographics/caseloads
  - attitudes towards palliative care
  - educational & professional needs
• Discussion
• Take home challenges, opportunities & responsibilities
Background...

- AH often overlooked as palliative care team members
- Integral role in optimising function, ↑ QOL, symptom Mx
- CareSearch developed the Allied Health Hub (2014) - 900+
- AHPA represent 120,000+ AH professionals
- Evaluation – knowledge needs & access to education
Research questions

1. What are Australian Allied Health (AH) clinicians’ attitudes towards palliative care?

2. How do these attitudes relate to their palliative care experiences & palliative care education needs?
Methods

- A cross-sectional online survey of Australian AH clinicians (Nov 2015-April 2016)

- 42 items (palliative care education, professional development, practice & attitudes)

- Purpose designed questionnaire, 5 item Likert scale, free text

- Demographic & sociodemographic data

- Disseminated via peak body websites, SIGs, CareSearch
Analysis

Statistical analysis:
• categorical data reported as number (proportion)
  - chi Square statistics to test for differences b/w groups
• continuous data reported as median (IQR)
  - median tests used with continuous data
• $P < 0.05$ (2 tailed) considered to be statistically significant

Content analysis:
• Free text questions
Demographics

- N= 217 (≥ 1 survey questions), 94% F
- All States & Territories represented: Vic: 28%, NSW: 24%, QLD: 22%
- Ages %

![Bar chart showing age distribution]
Disciplines
Years of clinical experience since training

- < 2 years
- 2 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 20 years
- > 20 years
Ave no palliative care clients per month (N=207)

65% >15 pm
Clinical setting

- Hospital: 50%
- Specialist PC: 30%
- Community: 20%
- Residential Aged Care: 5%
- Private Practice: 5%
- Other: 0%

Hospital & community 84%
Type of clinical care offered

- Same clinical care
- Different plus typical care
- Different clinical care
- Same clinical care in a different way

Same but different 86%
1. Attitudes towards palliative care
Same… but different

“co-ordination of support services who provide care…”

“incorporates liaising effectively with other health professionals…”

“support navigating social services.”

“anticipating needs through advance care planning…”

“include (but are not limited to) - pain care, planning for death…”

“'back of house' planning discussions…If we don't plan properly the death can be devastating…”
Client centred care

“Care completely based on client's wishes & values.”

“To listen to family response to recommendations & tailor intervention according to family feedback, needs etc.”

“To respect the wishes of client at all times even when this may conflict with the perceived needs of the client”
Facilitating participation

“being able to be as independent as possible, & having a dignified death.”

“…try to enable them to participate in that which they want & need to participate.”

“…helping people engage in the activities they wish to do towards the end of their life.”

“…enable them to be independent as they wish & to die with dignity.”
Therapeutic interventions that address living & dying

“…preparing people physically, emotionally & financially to die.”

“…explores what a good death means for each person…”

“…daunting experience as the realisation that the patient will not survive becomes real”

“education to the families about the progression through the stages of dying”

“…needs of the person as they change throughout their illness journey.”

“…adjust to the changes that occur as the end of life nears”
Responses towards palliative care clinical work

- I like working with palliative care patients (PCU: 90%, Non PCU: 80%)
- I choose to work with palliative care patients (PCU: 90%, Non PCU: 80%)
- Only because it is part of my role (PCU: 10%, Non PCU: 20%)
- Well equipped professionally to provide care (PCU: 100%, Non PCU: 90%)
- Well equipped personally to provide care (PCU: 100%, Non PCU: 90%)
- Well equipped professionally - spiritual care (PCU: 100%, Non PCU: 90%)
- Well equipped personally - spiritual care (PCU: 100%, Non PCU: 90%)
Challenges with palliative caseloads: PCU v non PCU
Well equipped to work with palliative care clients…
2. AH educational & professional needs
Undergraduate training prepared me (N=166)

Insufficiently prepared 95.7%
Need for additional education

- Yes: 67% identified need for more education
- No
- Unsure
Specialist palliative care post graduate qualifications?

No: 89%
Yes: 11%

N=119
11%
18 clinicians
Mode of professional development (N=155)

- Self-initiated reading: 44%
- Short in-service at workplace: 39%
- 1-2 day palliative care education day: 5%
- Online learning module(s): 5%
- Palliative care conference: 3%
- Video conference education: 1%

44% - ed’n day
39% - online
Barriers to accessing education

43% identified barriers to accessing education
Barriers to accessing education

- 41% Time
- 33% Cost
- 19% Backfill
- 19% Opportunities
So what?

50% (N=207) most or all care for patient who might die in the next 12 months
Discussion

• Palliative care: Not the sole domain of specialist clinicians

• Reflects changing patient demographics
  - ageing population
  - complex cases (IP) - NOT just the elderly
  - ↑ numbers cared for in the community & ↑ carer needs

• Escalating speed required around clinical decision making
  - Your knowledge & care impacts lives
AH practice needs

- **86%**: same clinical care but in a different way

  *How is care different?*

  preparing for death whilst living, family as second client, rapid management of crises, ongoing deterioration, grief & loss, debriefing needs

- **84%** saw palliative patients in hospital or community setting
- Only 33% saw palliative patients in a specialist PCU/Hospice

*Palliative care competencies are not an optional extra!*
AH education needs

- Accessible
- Affordable
- Applicable

- Realistic v idealistic: student & clinician expectations
  - cognitive dissonance can lead to distress & dissatisfaction

- Key areas for AH education include (44% - 56%)
  - grief & loss/depression & anxiety
  - symptom Mx, palliative Mx of malignant & non malignant diseases
  - communication skills
Take home challenges

Palliative care: **Not the sole domain** of specialist clinicians/units
- AH Clinicians want upskilling & ongoing support

Clinicians have a duty of care to patients & carers
- generalist knowledge, need to refer, care of self

Managers & health services have a duty of care to clinicians
- provide educational opportunities & access
Your opportunities...& responsibilities...

- Online education/resources: CareSearch, End of Life Essentials
- Peak bodies: AHPA, OTA, APA, SPA etc
- Palliative Care Australia, PCC4U
- Australian Allied Health in Palliative Care (AAHPC)
- QIAs, research (collaborate with palliative care AH researchers to develop an evidence base)
- Post graduate education (Grad cert/dip, Master of PC/Clin Science, PhD)

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CareSearch would like to thank the survey respondents and the many people who contribute their time and expertise to the project, including members of the National Advisory Group and the Knowledge Network Management Group and.

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