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PROMOTING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS IN PALLIATIVE CARE

'Do what you can, with what you have, where you are'

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Issue

- ***Patients identify functional needs and the ability to perform meaningful activities as an important goal of care however this is not always acknowledged in specialised palliative care units*** (Rasmussen & Sandman, 1998; Vrkljan & Miller-Polgar, 2001).

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Project Aims

- To conduct a literature review, survey and focus group to explore how to promote occupational therapy and functional needs in palliative care settings

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Survey Results

- Confirmed staffs' limited awareness of the scope of the occupational therapy role and importance of functional maintenance.

Examples of responses:

"To assess and facilitate provision of required equipment for patients during their stay"

"To facilitate discharge planning"

Literature review

FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

"The need to perform activities associated with one's independence or identity that allow them to fulfil meaningful roles"

(Lyons, 2006, p. 6)

- Second most important need after pain and symptom management
- Pain and symptom management – 62.8%
- Functional needs – 62.1%

(Morasso, Capelli & Viterbori, 1999)

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Literature review

REHABILITATION IN PALLIATIVE CARE

- Rationale - “to improve the patients’ quality of life by maximising their functional ability, to promote their independence and to help them adapt to their condition” (National Institute for Clinical Excellence, 2004, p. 16)

- Rehabilitation should aim to address medical, functional, psychosocial and spiritual needs using a multidisciplinary approach

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Literature review

OCCUPATION AND REHABILITATION

- Symptomatic effects of a terminal illness hinders the ability to carry out occupations
- More than just activities: Doing – Being – Becoming Framework (Wilcock, 1999)
- Purposeful activities have a positive effect on functional maintenance (Jeysingam *et al.*, 2008).
- OTs are equipped to enable patients to participate in occupations.

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Literature review

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

- Music Therapy
- Art Therapy

DAY HOSPICE PROGRAMS

Positive impact on wellbeing and QOL

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Project Outcomes

- Extensive literature review to inform practice and support business cases.
  - Presented to MDT and stakeholders
- Preliminary discussions on a multidisciplinary approach to functional maintenance.
  - Patient information pamphlet
- OT building profile as clinical leader in addressing functional needs

Project limitations

- Limited resources
  - No allocated music/art therapist
  - AH staff's time limited to assessment and discharge planning, bereavement support.
  - Inappropriate environment for day hospice
- ⇑ throughput and bed occupancy
- ⇑ workloads

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Plans for the future

- Continue to increase OT profile in MDT
  - Presentation to nursing staff
  - Use of AHA
- Complete patient information pamphlet
- Evaluate impact of new resources and changes in OT practice on promoting functional needs of patients.

Conclusion

- Important to address the functional needs of palliative patients and contribute to improved QOL.
- A multidisciplinary rehabilitation approach and better utilisation of OT services is recommended.

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