

The Role of Speech-Language Pathologists in Adult Palliative Care



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Background of this Study

- ❑ The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) projects that over the next 40 years, the proportion of the population over 65 years will almost double to approximately 25% (AIHW, 2012).
- ❑ The demand for palliative care services across Australia is expected to increase over time due to the continued growth and ageing of the population. In addition, the pattern of disease at the end of life is changing such that an increasing proportion of people are expected to die from chronic progressive illnesses—people with such illnesses are most likely to make use of palliative care services (AIHW, 2012).
- ❑ This study will explore the role of Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) within Australian palliative care settings
- ❑ Currently, patient care provided by the SLP is largely based on the World Health Organisation's components of palliative care (WHO, 1990).
- ❑ There are no current clinical practice guidelines available for SLPs working in palliative care settings (Perkins, Barclay & Booth, 2007).



Aims

1. To produce a profile of the current research on the role of SLPs in palliative care settings;
2. To explore how SLPs currently manage palliative cases within their work settings;
3. To identify key SLP practices that assist in palliative care management and explore gaps in SLP knowledge/experience that may prevent them from treating palliative patients;
4. To explore how SLP knowledge can be enhanced through collaborative development, implementation and evaluation of palliative and person centred care approaches;
5. To develop a set of recommendations to inform a future Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) in palliative care for SLPs.



Results of Scoping Review

From 1242 articles detected during the literature search; 13 key articles were identified as discussing the need for (and use) of procedures and protocols for SLPs working in palliative care. The papers were informative/exploratory in nature with four main themes arising from across the 13 papers:

1. The importance of SLP guidelines at end-of-life care;
2. Communication intervention in palliative and end-of-life care;
3. Oral feeding interventions and end-of-life care;
4. Concerns and considerations for SLP intervention in palliative care

Given the lack of published research and resources regarding the role of SLPs in palliative care contexts, there is a need to develop a database of relevant sources and references. There is a need to explore actual SLP practice in palliative care and to assess its effectiveness. This in turn will help to develop praxis-based material suitable for developing SLP clinical practice guidelines for palliative care.

Table 1: Allied health staffing levels for palliative care services per 100,000 population

Allied Health Positions	Community-based Service	Acute Hospital Consultative Service	Palliative Care Designated Beds
Psychology	0.25	0.10	0.10
Social Work	0.50	0.25	0.25
Bereavement Support	0.25	0.10	0.10
Pastoral Care	0.25	0.25	0.25
Speech Pathology	0.20	0.20	0.20

(PCV, 2013)

Would you like to be involved? If you are an SLP with experience or currently working in palliative care we would value your assistance in our next phase of research. Please scan the QR Code for our survey or contact
Laura Chahda – L.Delmedico@latrobe.edu.au for more information