Caring Communities Program - Project Overview

Organisation: General Practice Education Australia

Name of Project: An educational strategy to increase the palliative care capacity of primary health care providers working in rural and remote areas of Australia

Length of Project: 2 years

Project Summary:

This project is an interactive educational strategy aimed at increasing the palliative capacity of primary health-care providers working in four targeted rural and remote areas of Queensland. It is based on travelling workshops delivered to local rural venues by palliative care specialists from Mt Olivet Hospice working in collaboration with local primary health care provider generalists. Workshop participants will be recruited by Chapters of the Southern Division of General Practice (SQRDGP) and other health networks and will include as many members of the local primary health care team as practicable. Participants will determine the subject matter of the workshops according to their perceived local requirements. Workshops will attract continuing professional development (CPD) points for attending GPs, according to Royal Australian College of General Practitioner (RACGP) guidelines. In addition, a mentoring program that allows a community nurse to spend a week at the Mt Olivet Home Care facility will be instituted. The local Zonta Club will sponsor the nurses' travel, Mt Olivet will provide accommodation, and the employer asked to backfill the position.

Project Objectives:

- To increase the palliative care capacity and education of primary health care providers in four rural and remote areas of Queensland
- To improve palliative support for dying people and their families living in rural and remote areas of Queensland to allow them to die in the environment of their choice
- To improve networking between primary health care practitioners and specialists to enhance the skills of both groups in working collaboratively across professional boundaries
- To improve community awareness of, and involvement in, palliative care
- To develop an evaluated model to increase the palliative care capacity and education of primary health care providers working in rural and remote areas of Australia

Project Activities:

8 half-day workshops will be conducted in Roma, Cunnamulla, Miles and Charleville. Participants will be asked to complete and return a self-administered questionnaire/needs analysis that will collect data pertaining to:

- Demographics
- Knowledge of local availability of palliative care networks and services
- Perceived palliative education and learning needs assessment
- Referral patterns

Responses will be used to tailor workshop content for each site and to produce a local palliative service directory and resource document. A nurse, from each site will be invited to spend a week with the Mt Olivet Home Care Team in Brisbane. The nurse will assume the role of palliative care resource staff member when he/she returns home. The workshops will be evaluated using repeated measures questionnaires that are profession specific.