Caring Communities Program - Project Overview

Organisation: La Trobe University
Name of Project: Improving consumer and health professional access to comprehensive, accessible, evidence-based online information
Length of Project: 3 years

Project Summary:
The first Goal of the National Palliative Care strategy is to improve community and professional awareness and understanding, and professional commitment to, the role of palliative care practices in supporting the care needs of people who are dying and their families of care. This project addresses this goal by enhancing the existing Palliative Care Victoria web site so that it provides comprehensive, accessible, user-friendly, evidence-based information for consumers and health professionals.

This task will be overseen by a consortium of key stakeholders as a management group working with four expert panels: Consumers Issues, Palliative Care Medicine, Palliative Care Nursing and Equity and Access Issues- to provide expert analysis and advice. Special features of the website will be the inclusion of information signed in AUSLAN for the deaf community and audio material for those with sight and communication difficulties.

A mapping exercise will be undertaken to identify appropriate existing resources and for the identification of necessary new material. In partnership with expertise in web design, educational development and disabilities education, new material will be developed, incorporated into the website, evaluated and modifications made in line with evaluation findings and expert advice. A process to ensure the regular ongoing development and maintenance of the website will be developed, trialled and implemented.

Project Objectives:
1. To improve the current Palliative Care Victoria website so that it provides online access to information for the general public, including those with sight, hearing and communication difficulties, along with accessible evidence-based pain, symptom and psycho-social information for health professionals, particularly GPs and community nurses.
    - Improve the scope, accessibility and content of the web-based information available to members of the general public to enable informed and empowered choice regarding end of life care alternatives and service provision;
    - Provide health professionals with highly relevant and accessible web-based evidence based information regarding best practice pain, symptom and psycho-social management of palliative care clients;
    - Develop web links to and from appropriate sites to increase accessibility and develop new web content for consumers with sight, hearing and language difficulties.

Project Activities:
1. Identify, source and list information about palliative care available to Victorian consumers, carers and health care professionals.

2. Establish panels.

3. Undertake a gap analysis.

4. Source and develop evidence-based (EB) information that will address the identified service provider needs. Reduce, simplify and assemble material using approved EB search and review techniques and criteria.

5. Work with the Centre for Online and Multimedia Educational Technologies (COMET), and an educational developer and the *Access and Equity* Expert Panel to develop online audio and visual educational information that is accessible for health professionals and the general public, including people with disabilities.

6. Upgrade the Palliative Care Victoria (PCV) Website with the new content, to be accessed via two portals.

7. Implement and advertise the revised PCV website with links to and from other websites.

8. Develop a sustainability structure and seek funding support to ensure the regular ongoing development and maintenance of the website.

9. Implement strategy for sustainability of the website.

10. Evaluate website and sustainability strategy and modify website.

11. Produce a report.

Main Message

What was done

- Collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders (consumers, carers, volunteers and health professionals) to design, develop and refine a multi-portal website for Palliative Care Victoria (PCV) that offers quality information about palliative care and palliative care services in Victoria. www.pallcarevic.asn.au

What has been learnt

- A significant disparity exists between online resources available and the information needs about palliative care of health care professionals and the general public.
- Involvement of multiple stakeholders in the development and testing process produces a quality website and enhances capacity building in the field.
- To ensure sustainability, a website needs a clear plan of responsibility and resources allocated to its continuance.
- The site is likely to become a central reference point for Victorian health practitioners as well as non-professionals searching for information on palliative care on the internet.

Usefulness to other projects/communities

- Although the site has been specifically tailored to meet the information needs of Victorians, it will provide valuable resources for all Australians and is cross-linked to other sites.
- The project is likely to improve the capacity of health professionals as well as the wider public to make informed choices in dealing with palliative care issues.
- The collaborative project design can be applied to other online health information/education projects.

Benefits of disseminating information about this project

- Dissemination to the palliative care community has ensured participation, support and mechanisms for sustainability.
- Wider dissemination will occur at the public launch

Needing to happen in order to sustain the key achievements of this project

- The PCV Board needs to appoint an Editorial Panel and ensure that PCV Special Interest Groups revise site content relevant to each Group on a regular basis
- Support for the PCV volunteer webmaster and regular review of the user statistics of the site to ascertain it retains its relevance
- Ensure that ongoing site maintenance is costed into plans for implementing the palliative care communication strategy.

Resources developed and availability to others

- The website brings together definitions and explanations of key terms and concepts, evidence-based clinical information, psychological and legal resources, as well as an exhaustive list of agencies and community organisations that provide health care assistances. These quality resources are freely available online.