Encouraging Better Practice in Aged Care
Round 2 Project Overview
PALLIATIVE CARE – Murrumbidgee General Practice Network
Encouraging best practice palliative care in residential aged care facilities from rural and remote communities within NSW, South Australia and Victoria

PROJECT OVERVIEW

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT WAS TO ADDRESS THE IDENTIFIED THEORY GAPS THAT EXIST BETWEEN THE GUIDELINES FOR A PALLIATIVE APPROACH IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE, AND WHAT IS ACTUALLY DELIVERED WITHIN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES (RACFs). FOURTEEN FACILITIES IN 12 LOCATIONS ACROSS NSW, VIC AND SA TOOK PART IN THE PROJECT.

WHAT WAS DONE?
The project aimed to bridge the gap in palliative care in rural and remote RACFs by adopting a multi-disciplinary evidence-based framework for end-of-life care and providing access to education for aged care staff.

The project emphasised four guidelines from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (2006) Guidelines for a palliative approach in residential aged care (enhanced version):
- To provide a palliative approach in the resident’s familiar surroundings if adequately skilled care is available. This reduces the need for transfer to an acute setting and avoids potential distress to the resident and their family/carer (Guideline 3).
- To provide a palliative approach through multidisciplinary coordinated care (Guideline 4).
- To provide a systematic implementation of advance care planning involving communication between the resident, family and doctor which increases satisfaction with the care provided (Guideline 7).
- To develop comprehensive advance care plans that include ongoing assessment, respond to changes in the resident’s health and increases satisfaction with care (Guideline 9).

In addition to the guidelines the project drew upon the following evidence-based resources:
- Palliative Care Outcomes Collaboration (PCOC) benchmarking tools.
- Brisbane South Palliative Care Collaborative and Lyell McEwin End of Life Care Pathways.

Key activities included:
- Collecting data before and after project implementation by conducting focus groups and interviews with families and healthcare providers.
- Collecting data on demographics and several indicators of quality of care through a one day “census” of residents in RACFs, both before and after the interventions.

Providing education to aged care staff in the following areas:
- Active Learning Modules, Palliative Care Australia;
- ‘Respecting Patient Choices’ including ‘Train the trainer’ – offered in two of the GP divisions;
- PCOC – use of assessment tools – offered in 2 of the GP divisions;
- Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach; and
- TAFE Certificate III and IV accredited training modules.

Implementing End of Life Care Pathways as a trial for the evidence-based framework.

Developing and distributing a quarterly project newsletter to all RACF staff, residents...
and families/carers. The newsletters communicated the scope and aim of the project, profiled each participating facility, promoted the project and educated in regard to strategies.

**WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?**
- Improved access to education for aged care staff and enhanced skill and confidence for staff to address a family’s needs.
- The education was appropriately suited to the needs of the participants.
- Communication increased between care staff and family members regarding end of life care.
- Staff confidence increased around end of life care issues.
- The use of Advance Care Planning was encouraged.

**WHAT WAS THE IMPACT FOR STAFF?**
- Improved access to education for aged care staff in accordance with their needs.
- Enhanced skills and confidence of staff members to address family needs when planning end of life care through education surrounding Advanced Care Planning.
- Increased staff confidence in their interactions with GPs both when planning and implementing Advanced Care Planning.
- A more standardised framework for advanced care plans.
- Staff members embraced the End of Life Care Pathways which improved communication and provision of prompts for holistic care.
- Improved awareness of community palliative care nursing services.

**WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?**
Developing new resources was not a focus of this project. Instead, existing resources were adapted for use in the project, including tools to assist with data collection and to inform staff about how to conduct multidisciplinary team meetings.

**WHAT COULD BE ADOPTED IN MY SERVICE?**
- Examples of small changes that facilities could make to have a positive impact on residents’ care towards the end of their life include:

**WHAT WAS THE IMPACT FOR RESIDENTS?**
- Each individual had attention when needed, through a targeted approach to care needs.
- Implementation of End of Life Care Pathways and Advanced Care Plans led to increased communication and understanding of the situation for residents and their families.
- Families reported being happy to be included in Advanced Care Planning and with the palliative care being provided by the facility.

Resources used or adapted throughout the project included:
- Ten things to know about grief
- A pamphlet produced for staff members to assist families and carers dealing with grief and loss.
- Therapeutic Guidelines Palliative Care version 3, 2010
- A guide distributed to participating facilities and GPs to enhance the education provided by the project. See http://www.tg.org.au/?sectionid=47.
- Lyell McEwin EoLCP
- An End of Life Care Pathway now used by a number of facilities.
- Jelly Bean’s Secret, Molly Carlile, Innovative Resources 2004
- Advanced care planning DVD
  - A DVD produced by Hunter New England Health to assist with Advanced Care Planning.
- Provide access to bereavement support to help staff members deal with the emotional strain of End of Life Care.
- Conduct debriefing sessions after a resident passes away.
- Adopt End of Life Care Pathways with appropriately qualified staff, and involve GPs in the implementation process.
- Increase the communication between families and staff over End of Life Care Pathways.

**WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**
For further information regarding this and other Round 1 and Round 2 EBPAC projects see the Department of Health and Ageing website at www.health.gov.au/ebpac.