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An Assessment of Current Palliative Care Beliefs and Knowledge: The Primary Palliative Care Providers' Perspective

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An Assessment of Current Palliative Care Beliefs and Knowledge: The Primary Palliative Care Providers’ Perspective
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Background
The growing trend in the utilization of palliative care services has dictated that all healthcare providers be adequately trained to care for people with serious illnesses. The impact on the delivery of patient care may be influenced by the healthcare providers’ perceived competence and knowledge of palliative care. A palliative care training program offering CME/CE credits to specific disciplines was instituted within our organization in 2008. However, little is known about the effectiveness of such training in providing quality palliative care.

Purpose
This study evaluated the level of perceived competence and knowledge among healthcare providers (HCP) who participated in a palliative training program as compared to those who did not receive palliative training.

Research Questions
1. Did HCP who participated in the palliative care training have significantly higher levels of perceived competency regarding palliative care compared to those who did not take the training?
2. Did HCP who participated in the palliative care training have significantly higher levels of knowledge regarding palliative care compared to those who did not take the training?
3. Is there a significant association between HCP perceived competence in providing primary palliative care (PPC) and their knowledge of PPC?

Methods
Design: a pre-experimental static group comparison design.
Sample: a non-randomized sample of healthcare providers across our seven hospital system (n=388); those who took the training (n=121); those who did not take the training (n=259).
Instruments:
(1) Demographics
(2) End-of-Life Professional Survey (28-item, 5 pt Likert scale)
(3) PI developed Palliative Care Survey (20 item self-report questionnaire)
Procedures: Survey distributed and completed online over a 4 week period.
Analysis: Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.
Study was approved by the institutional review board

Results
- Disciplines:
  - 54% = Nurses
  - 26% = RT, SW, GP, PT, OT, RD, MD, Chaplain
  - 24% = “other” (CME credit not awarded)
- Referrals within the past year:
  - 80% of respondents made 0-3 referrals
- Direct Patient Care:
  - 45% spent <1/2 their time in direct patient care
  - 55% spent >1/2 their time in direct patient care
- Years of Experience:
  - 45% had <15 years experience
  - 33% had 1-10 years experience

Differences between Training status group on demographic characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Chi-square, (df)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of palliative care referrals last year</td>
<td>X²=20.836, (4)</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>*P&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend at least 50% of time in direct care</td>
<td>X²=.436, (1)</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>P= .509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary role</td>
<td>X²=29.52, (8)</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>*P&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Midlevel providers</td>
<td>X²=176, (1)</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>P= .675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years in profession</td>
<td>X²=6.659, (4)</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>P= .155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Score: Perceived Competency & Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Pooled sample (all respondent)</th>
<th>Yes = Trained</th>
<th>No = Not Trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Competency</td>
<td>59.88 (n=384)</td>
<td>54.14 (n=128)</td>
<td>62.75 (n=256)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>12.53 (n=349)</td>
<td>13.61 (n=118)</td>
<td>11.98 (n=231)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results Cont’d
- Participants who did not take the training course perceived themselves more competent when compared to those who took the course (Mann-Whitney U=21,332, z=4.827, p=.000)
- Participants who took the training course scored significantly higher on knowledge than those who did not (Mann-Whitney U=10,257.00 z=3.797 p=.000)
- For the pooled sample, there was significant negative association between perceived competency and knowledge scores (Spearman’s rho = - .380, n=330 p=.000) Within the group who took the training, negative association was a trend but there was not a significant association between perceived competency and knowledge scores. (Spearman’s rho = - .131, p=.165 (n=113)

Discussion
- This study supports the need for ongoing education to increase palliative care knowledge among HCP.
- Quality patient care outcomes are compromised if care is delivered by those who perceive they are competent without adequate knowledge and training.
- HCP may self-select out of the training due to their perception of being competent.

Recommendations
Examination of demographic predictors of perceived competency and knowledge
- What were the underlying reasons for the negative association between perceived competency & knowledge?
- What attributed in the lower perceived competency score for the trained HCPs?

References

Acknowledgement
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