The Multi-disciplinary Team and After Hours Palliative Care

Credits:

Educational Content:
Palliative Care Research Team, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Peninsula Campus, Monash University in collaboration with:

- The Department of General Practice Monash University
- Royal District Nursing Service, Melbourne
- Faculty of Life & Social Science, Swinburne University

Video Clip Participants:
- Dr Brian McDonald - Palliative Care Consultant – Presenter
- Dr Peter Schattner - General Practitioner
- Patient Simulation Service (Monash University) – Patient
- South East Palliative Care – Multidisciplinary team meeting

Production:
- Multimedia Team, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University
- Web Technology Services, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University

Financial Support:
Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing
Reference List:

Advance Care Planning:

- Advance Care Plan Information Sheet: www.racgp.org.au/.../ClinicalResources/RACPGGuidelines/AdvanceCarePlans/VIC_Advance_Care_Plan.pdf

Team Communication:


Introduction:

Appropriate after hours care is essential in assisting those receiving palliative care to remain at home as long as possible

This presents a number of challenges for both professionals and carers

Two vital requirements of this care provision are:

- appropriate advance care planning
- communication within the multi-disciplinary team including with the patient’s GP

These two aspects of the role of health professionals will be reviewed in this presentation.
Learning Objectives:

This resource supports professionals to:

- Heighten awareness of the importance of effective multi-disciplinary team function in the after-hours care of people receiving palliative care at home.

- Increase awareness of the role of advance planning in after hours care

- Increase skills and confidence in multi-disciplinary team communication

- Be aware of the relevance of Enhanced Primary Care Medicare Items in the implementation of the above.

Advanced Care Planning – Introduction:

An advance care plan is a very important part of effective after hours care and needs to be accessible to the after-hours staff.

Effective advance care planning includes the following considerations:

- understanding of prognosis and the usual course of the disease

- assisting the patient to achieve personal goals

- advising the patient about decision making

- the medical treatment act and refusal of treatment

- wills and funerals

It is important for good after hours care that the patient’s wishes about issues such as emergency medication, resuscitation and treatment refusals are available in patient notes accessible to after-hours staff. Each multidisciplinary team needs to make arrangements to ensure these records are available to those who need access after-hours.

GPs are able to use Enhanced Medicare Items to provide adequate planning time for their patients. Over the illness trajectory it is important that plans are revisited and if necessary updated. Patient’s views can change as their illness progresses.

For more information about advance care planning refer to the reference list.
Advanced Care Planning – Reflection Point 1:

How can relevant information from advance care plans be made available to after-hours staff in your multidisciplinary team?

Advanced Care Planning – Feedback:

Have you considered the following points?

- Are advance care plans developed by GPs with their patients passed on to the palliative care service on referral?
- If not how could this be arranged in your service?
- Do after hours call staff have access to these records in your service?
- If not how could this be organised so that each patient’s wishes can be considered in the provision of best possible care?
- Are these advance care plans reviewed as patient circumstances change?

Team Communication:

Good communication between members of the inter-disciplinary team is essential to good patient care and is especially important for matters that may be of concern after hours. Regular team meetings (which can include some members taking part by teleconference) are an important part of effective team communication.

Poor communication leads to less adequate patient care and higher levels of frustration among the team members.

Important issues of communication that are particularly relevant to after hours care are:

- patient admission/discharge
- scripts for emergency medication
- provision for GPs to get specialist advice
- provision for nurses to get GP advice
- signing of death certificates after hours for patients who have died at home any changes in advance care plans especially as they relate to preferred place of death and resuscitation instructions

Remember GPs can claim for time spent with team meetings through Enhanced Primary Care items.
Team Communication – Reflection Point 2:

Does your multidisciplinary team have a process in place (known to all team members) for dealing with after-hours patient issues?

How could your team plan be improved to provide better patient care and less frustration for team members?

What aspects of the example given, would work in your situation and what would not be appropriate?

Team Communication – Feedback 2:

If you are part of a team have you considered the following points?

- What is your team plan for dealing with issues such as medication needed for after-hours emergency and nurse and doctor access after-hours?

- How does your team ensure that all members, including the patient’s GP are kept up to date with any changes in the patient’s status or wishes for care?

- Does your team have multidisciplinary meetings including involvement of the patient’s GP? If this is difficult have you considered using teleconferencing?

If you are a GP working with patients who have been referred to a palliative care service have you considered the following points?

- How do you work collaboratively with the palliative care consultant and other multidisciplinary team members to ensure best patient care including access to necessary medication after hours?

- How do you achieve communication of updated information about the patient between yourself and the palliative care service? Are there ways this could be improved?

- Have you considered teleconferencing as one means of improving communication between those involved in the care of your patient?
Summary:

The key points presented which are important for the adequate provision of after-hours care for patients receiving palliative care at home are:

- A comprehensive advance care plan is necessary to ensure that patient wishes are respected and trauma minimized.

- A high level of multidisciplinary team communication results in best patient care and lower stress levels for health professionals.

- Access to up to date patient information is essential for best patient care and the effective function of after-hours staff.

- General Practitioners can claim remuneration for time spent on advance care planning and multi-disciplinary team meetings through the Enhanced Primary Care Medicare Items.