Innovations in Palliative Care: Implementation of a Pediatric Palliative Care Champions Program

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Caring for a child with a life-limiting illness can be one of the most difficult parts in the role of a healthcare professional (HCP). Palliative care has been shown to relieve suffering across multiple realms, including physical, psychological, practical and existential; improve quality of life; facilitate informed decision making and assist with coordination of care (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). Provision of quality palliative care includes acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a variety of critical concepts including communication; pain and symptom management; care at the time of death; loss, grief, and bereavement; and ethical and legal issues (ELNEC-PPC, 2013). However, HCPs often admit a lack of comfort and confidence in providing these critical concepts when a patient is diagnosed with a life-limiting illness or at the end-of-life.

**Objectives**

- Promote comprehensive quality palliative care for patients across the healthcare system
- Enhance the collaboration that occurs between unit staff & the Palliative Care Team
- Select staff members with an interest in palliative care to serve as unit champions
- Develop an educational program to train & provide ongoing support and education to the unit champions.

**Purpose**

Initiation of a Palliative Care Champions Program will improve the quality of care provided to patients & families diagnosed with life-limiting illnesses, receiving palliative care, or at end-of-life.

**Materials and Methods**

**Identify Champions**
- Director approval
- 2 years in RN role
- Desire to serve in role

**Initial Education**
- End-of-life Nursing Education Consortium – Pediatric Palliative Care
- Orientation Workshop (4hr)
- Shadow Palliative Care Team (4hr)

**Ongoing Education**
- Quarterly Educational Sessions (2hr)
- Attend at least 75% of quarterly sessions each year
- Obtain CHPPN certification within 2 years
- Demonstrate continued involvement by fulfilling role duties

**Maintenance Requirements**
- Director approval
- 2 years in RN role
- Desire to serve in role

**Outcomes Measurement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palliative Care Champions</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Patient &amp; Family</th>
<th>Palliative Care Team</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory with progress and education/training</td>
<td>Comfort &amp; confidence in provision of palliative care</td>
<td>Time spent in role</td>
<td>% of physicians that consult</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of physicians that consult</td>
<td>Time from admit to consult</td>
<td>% of physicians that consult</td>
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</tbody>
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**Benefits of a Palliative Care Champions Program**

- **Patient & Family**
  - Access to more comprehensive care
  - Facilitation of a comfortable death in any area of the hospital
- **Champions**
  - Comfort & confidence in providing end-of-life & palliative care
  - Increased ability to identify appropriate patients for consult
  - Enhanced ability to mentor other staff in provision of palliative care
- **Staff**
  - Empowered to provide palliative care
  - Decreased moral distress by empowering staff to support one another
- **Palliative Care Team**
  - Decreased moral distress
  - Increased support in reaching more patients
  - Better access to appropriate patients for consult

**Palliative Care Champions: Pre-Survey**

- Comfort in being considered an “expert” in palliative care for unit/dept: 39.00%
- Confidence in ability to mentor other staff in provision of palliative care: 55.00%
- Comfort in communicating with patients & families at end of life: 61.00%
- Comfort in knowledge of medications used for palliative care symptom management: 45.00%