

Using an e-learning methodology to improve advance care providers knowledge and confidence regarding the provision of palliative care

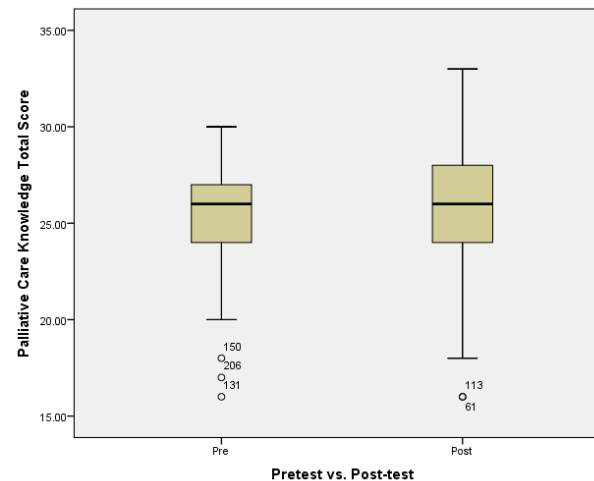
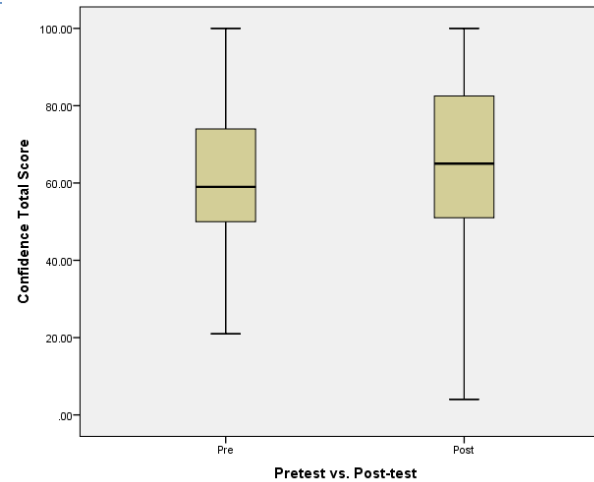
Santiago Lopez, MD; Gene DeCastro, MD; Mary Anne McNamee, MA, RN-BC

Background: Although palliative care improves patient care by preventing and treating physical, spiritual, and existential suffering¹ while improving value², widespread understanding of its philosophy in the greater medical community is still a work-in-progress. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, in the United States “...in response to shortages and uneven distribution of physicians...” advance care “... providers, including nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs) have played an important role in primary care.”³

Method: We evaluated the impact on advance care providers’ knowledge and confidence about palliative care provisions before and after giving them a web based training about basic palliative care concepts (Basic Palliative Care, Pain Management in Advanced Illness, Syndrome of Imminent Death, and Advance Care Planning). A web-based training system, iLearn, was used. Four lectures were provided and Nursing Credits were given. Validated tools, including a modified version of the PEACE-Q (for measuring knowledge) and the validated Self-efficacy in Palliative Care Scale (SEPC) (for measuring confidence), were utilized.

References:

1. Timothy E. Quill, Robert G. Holloway. Primer of Palliative Care. 5th edition. Page 1.
2. Robin E. Fail, MPP, Diane E. Meier, MD, FACP, Improving Quality of Care for Seriously Ill Patients: Opportunities for Hospitalists. *J. Hosp. Med* 2018;3;194-197. Published online first December 20, 2017. doi:10.12788/jhm.28963.
3. The Number of Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants Practicing Primary Care in the United States. Content last reviewed July 2018. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. <http://www.ahrq.gov/research/findings/factsheets/primary/pcwork2/index.html>
4. Dumainovsky, T., Augustin, R., Rogers, M., Lettang, K., Meier, D. E., & Morrison, R. S. (2016). The Growth of Palliative Care in U.S. Hospitals: A Status Report. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 19(1), 8–15. <http://doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2015.0351>



Results: 72 advance care providers were initially enrolled. The mean age was 43 years old and participants were mainly female. 35% were Caucasian and 16% were of Asian descent. Most of participants had at least 8 years in clinical practice but indicated only 2 years of experience with palliative care. However, 209 Nurse Practitioners enrolled for the post survey. The demographics were similar. Post-Survey participants indicated an average of 21 years clinical experience, but, still indicated only 2 years of experience with palliative care.

The results showed that there was a significant ($p=.036$) but small increase in knowledge from a mean score of 25.4 in the pre-test to 25.9 in the post-test. There was also a significant increase ($p=.030$) in confidence from a mean of 60.9 in the pre-test to 66.7 in the post-test.

Conclusion: Although the number of hospital palliative care programs in the United States has progressively grown, “...access to palliative care remains uneven...”⁴ Advance care providers have become an important part of facilitating access to palliative care. However, there is a dearth of studies analyzing the impact on advance care providers’ knowledge and confidence about palliative care when using web-based training systems. Although there were limitations for matching and enrollment, this study is a first step in understanding the impact on knowledge and confidence of these education initiatives.