# Palliative Care Learning Collaborative: Nursing Impact

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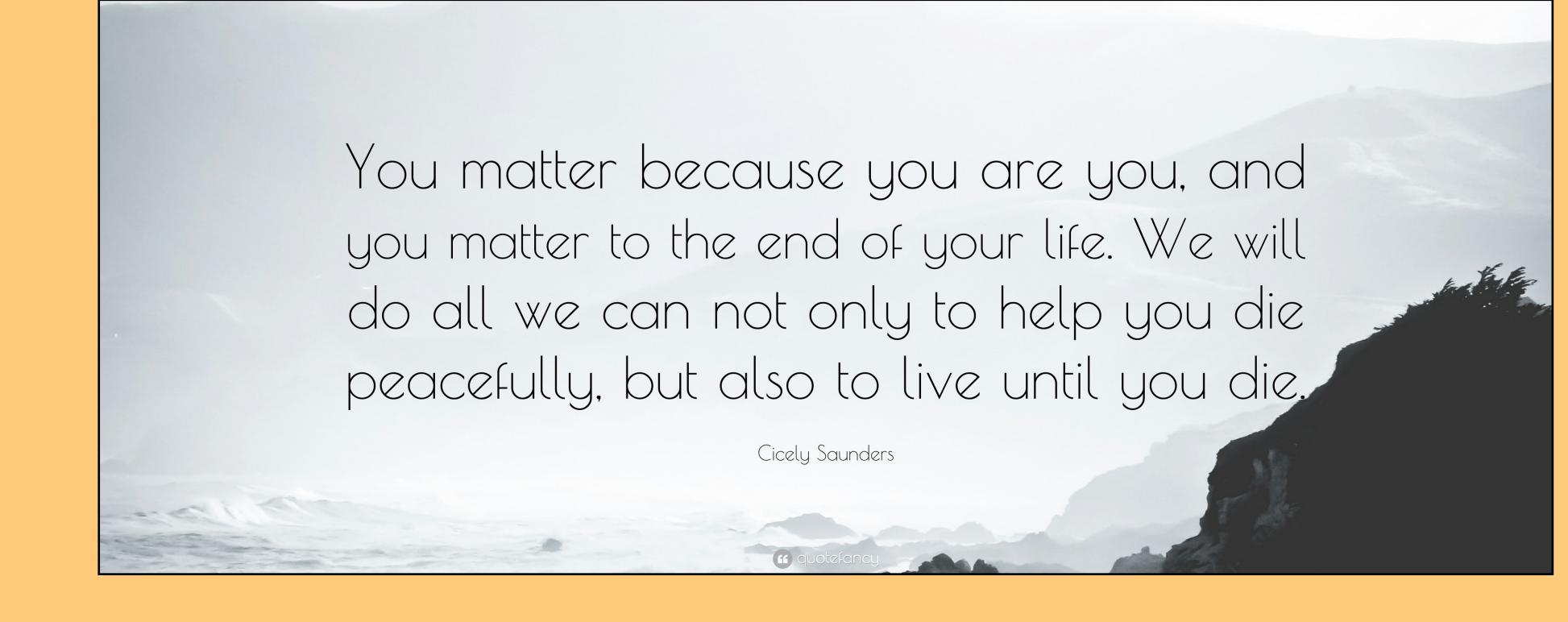Atlantic Health System
Morristown Medical Center

## Purpose

Early introduction of palliative care enhances quality of life for patients with chronic and/or life-limiting illness. This project aims to educate and empower nurses to introduce the concept of palliative care and facilitate a timely approach to patients, caregivers, and the healthcare team.

## Relevance

Patients with chronic illness or life-limiting disease benefit from early introduction to palliative care during their hospital stay. Nurses are well-situated to recognize the need for palliative care but lacked knowledge and communication skills to facilitate palliative care intervention. Our targeted approach provided nurses with the tools to recognize the need for and openly communicate about palliative care and symptom management with patients, families/caregivers, and physicians.

> You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.
>
> Cicely Saunders

## Strategy and Implementation

Our team worked together to develop a two-hour intensive education session designed to improve the nurses' ability to recognize the appropriate time to introduce PC, build communication skills, demystify common misperceptions of hospice and palliative care and utilize PC for symptom management. Each participant earned 2.25 CEUs for attending the program. The curricular content is based on the End of Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) training and Center for Advancement of Palliative Care (CAPC) resource materials. The education sessions incorporated a variety of teaching strategies to appeal to a diversity of learning needs including PowerPoint, role-play, and open discussion. Participants completed self-assessment surveys pre and post intervention, three-months and six-months post intervention. The survey was designed to measure nurses' perceived knowledge and competence in the material presented during the educational sessions.

Scan here to see the survey that was used in this study!

## Evaluation

The data collection approach has evolved from paper survey collection tools for the first two cohorts (n=180), to currently digitizing the data collection using RedCap for our current cohort (n=123). Overall, there was an overwhelming trend that participants reported higher competence scores post intervention, illustrating improved palliative care knowledge. Additionally, participants and supervisors have reported positive qualitative comments which support the intended impact of the initiative. For a subset of data, we followed 3 months (n=69) and 6 months (n=54) there was a noted slight decreased trend score, indicating a recommendation for annual training to reinforce the PC knowledge and skills. The intention is to bolster our data analysis process for our anticipated cohorts of 300 nurses in Fall 2019, as well as expand to an interdisciplinary audience.

## Implication for Practice

Palliative care (PC) trained nurses can identify and address primary PC needs, which enables specialty PC services to handle more complex patient care loads. This optimizes PC resources for patients with chronic or life limiting illness, which ultimately improves quality of life.