Palliative Care Education in Nursing Homes

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Background
An increasing number of people will end their lives in nursing care homes (WHO, 2011). Consequently, the importance of good palliative and end-of-life care provision for nursing home staff has been emphasised. Training, based around specific competencies for these staff, may promote good palliative care in this setting (Raunkiaer & Timm, 2010) and there have been calls for evaluation of such training (Hall et al, 2011). A regional nursing home education and training programme was set up to develop staff competencies.

Aims
To determine how participants self-rate their competence in palliative and end-of-life care before and after a competency-based training programme.

Methods
A short prospective cohort study design was used whereby 13 participants completed a multi-item palliative and end-of-life care competency self-assessment tool looking at knowledge, skills and attitudes, before and after a three day training course. Demographic and work-related information were recorded. Descriptive and comparative data analysis was carried out (SPSS).

Results of Pilot Study
The initial cohort consisted of twelve females and one male, ten of whom were aged over 35 years. Nine were staff nurses and four were sister/managers. Improvements in their knowledge, skills and attitudes were recorded in their competencies, particularly in understanding audit research processes and their uses in improving practice; in discussing, contributing and assisting with palliative and EOL research studies and in applying research findings to improve outcomes.

Discussion
Evaluation of facilitated competence based training by pre and post self-assessment proved useful in illustrating the nature and extent of knowledge, skills and attitudes development to both trainers and participants.

Conclusion
Competence based training and self-evaluation may lead to improved palliative care practice in nursing home as more staff engage in palliative care training. Recommendations include the extension and application of this type of learning in specific projects such as breaking bad news and advanced directives.

References
Hall, S., Koliakou, A., Petkova, H., Froggatt, K., Higginson, I (2011) Interventions for Improving Palliative Care for Older People Living in Nursing Care Homes (Review). Cochrane Collaboration
