



Palliative Care & Heart Failure Action Research Project Mater and Connolly Hospitals, Dublin



Establishing a Framework for Palliative Interventions within Heart Failure Services

Background and Context

Heart failure is a disease with high mortality, characterised by a range of physical and psychological symptoms impacting on both patients and families/carers. The joint Irish Hospice Foundation/HSE report "Palliative Care for All" examined the palliative care needs of people with heart failure, dementia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It found little evidence of the integration of palliative care into disease-specific services in Ireland. This action research project arises from one of the key recommendations of the report and will support the development of palliative care within heart failure disease-management frameworks. The report contains a specific appendix on palliative care for people with heart failure.

The care pathway for people with heart failure can interface with a wide range of services and care settings. If palliative care is to be part of the patient journey it needs to be integrated into and co-ordinated between all of these services and settings. This will require collaborative working and shared care, and will also need to take account of the multiple co-morbidities that present for this patient population

The action research project will facilitate the development and implementation of a model of palliative support and intervention for people with heart failure. It will also provide guidance on education for staff and information materials for patients and carers on the role of palliative care in heart failure.

"The principles of palliative care must be embedded into disease management frameworks."

Palliative Care for All report
Irish Hospice Foundation/HSE 2008

PALLIATIVE CARE FOR ALL

Integrating Palliative Care into Disease Management Frameworks



The Research Project Goal

Devise, implement and evaluate appropriate palliative care responses for people with heart failure within an Irish health care context.

Objectives

- ❖ Identify potential palliative responses in the disease management programme of patients with heart failure, considering the needs of both patient and family members.
- ❖ Identify key personnel involved in delivering palliative responses.
- ❖ Recognise, where appropriate, the role and support of the primary care-giver and family in relation to palliative interventions.
- ❖ Identify and provide necessary education materials and training for key personnel appropriate to their grade and location.
- ❖ Provide guidelines to identify when degree of palliative intervention needs to escalate and referral methods for required service intervention.
- ❖ Further examine the potential role of specialist palliative care for people with heart failure and their family members.
- ❖ Evaluate the benefit of palliative interventions from patient, family/carer and staff perspectives.
- ❖ Recommend service model components based on evaluation.

Method and Process

A research project officer (part-time) will support the two-year research project and it will be overseen by a local management team. Action research has been found to be effective in closing the theory-practice gap, in facilitating collaboration for strategic change and to be suited to small-scale projects to effect change within health settings. This approach also provides health professionals with the opportunity to reflect on practice and explore ways of improving service delivery. The project is due to commence in late 2009.

Research Site and Partners

The site for the action research projects is the Cardiology Department at Mater Misericordiae University Hospital and Connolly Hospital, Dublin. Two consultant cardiologists, the cardiology multidisciplinary team, local GP and primary care network, consultant in palliative medicine and specialist palliative care services are key partners in the research, along with the Irish Hospice Foundation and the Irish Heart Foundation.

Anticipated Outcomes

- ❖ Further clarity on nature, potential and timing for palliative interventions for people with heart failure for service users, family members and staff.
- ❖ To frame a model of support and intervention for implementation in other heart failure services.
- ❖ Education material for key personnel in delivering palliative responses.
- ❖ Guidelines for the introduction of palliative interventions and referral to specialist palliative care for people with heart failure.
- ❖ Information materials for service users, family members and staff outlining symptoms, treatment options and advance planning for people with heart failure.
- ❖ Identification of future research needed in policy and practice in this area.

This research project is jointly funded by the Irish Hospice Foundation, the Irish Heart Foundation and the Baxter International Foundation with the full support of the HSE. As part of the Palliative Care for All Programme two further research projects are being undertaken on palliative care for people with advanced respiratory disease and those with dementia.

Contact points for further information:

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