

Title: Inpatient Palliative Care in a Rural Community Hospital: A Needs Assessment Survey

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Problem Statement: Inpatient PC is available in 72% of hospitals with > 50 beds in the United States. Rural hospitals are less likely to have dedicated PC services. Factors that limit the availability of specialty PC include lack of understanding of its nature and lack of institutional infrastructure for service provision.

Background/Literature Review: A relevant evidence search from 2015-2020 was performed using PubMed, Google Scholar, and Cochrane reviews. Research supported the positive effects of an inpatient PC service, and identified common barriers, including lack of PC knowledge.

Purpose: This quality improvement project's purpose is to conduct a needs assessment to evaluate PC literacy among health care providers in a rural community hospital, identify barriers to PC provision, and guide the development of educational opportunities related to PC services.

Methods: A 19-question needs assessment survey was developed and distributed to 164 health care providers at a 192-bed community hospital between 4/1/22-5/15/22. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data.

Findings: Forty-five percent of recipients completed the survey. RNs accounted for 61%, MDs and APPs 31%. On average, 33% were satisfied with current provision of PC, though the same number were misinformed about available services. The majority (55%) had received some PC education in the previous two years. Preferred modalities for additional training were web-based (70%) and lunchtime modules (46.7%). Inconvenient scheduling and lack of financial compensation were cited obstacles to attending educational events. Many (~50%) had limited understanding of specific PC services available in the hospital. The elderly population was identified as those most needing PC. Nearly 20% expressed discomfort speaking with patients about limited prognosis.

Implications: There is a wide range of palliative care knowledge in this community hospital, but there is interest in learning about palliative care. Survey responses offer a guide to the development of future PC educational opportunities.