

## Title Palliative Care in the PICU: A Needs Assessment

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**Statement of Problem:** Pediatric palliative care (PPC) offers specialized, interdisciplinary care for the dynamic needs of children facing serious illness. PPC services in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) are currently limited at Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento (SMCS). Before children and families can fully receive support, a needs assessment should be performed to facilitate the development of a clear plan for PPC.

**Background:** Literature suggests that PPC is valuable for children with complex conditions to increase quality of life. Research reveals multiple barriers, dissatisfiers, and educational gaps preventing PPC inclusion.

**Purpose:** To determine PICU healthcare professional (HCP) awareness, knowledge, learning needs, barriers, and satisfiers regarding PPC.

**Measures:** In Fall 2020, a descriptive survey using a validated needs assessment with quantitative and open-ended questions queried HCPs employed in the 20-bed SMCS PICU. Descriptive statistics and content analysis summarized data.

**Findings:** Eighty-eight HCPs (56% RNs, 19% MDs) with an average 15-years experience responded to the 10-minute survey. HCPs regularly (43% weekly, 42% daily) care for seriously ill children and are familiar (37% somewhat, 62% very) with PC but find that it is only always or frequently (21%) and sometimes (73%) integrated into care. Key PPC inclusion triggers were diagnoses (cancer, congenital anomalies), end-of-life (EOL) conversations, and family conflict. Satisfiers include spiritual care, family support, and symptom management. Nurses and physicians differed in their satisfaction around goals of care and treatment option discussions and patient/family understanding and support. Barriers include differences among HCPs about prognosis/treatment and whether to include PPC, inconsistency among providers on plan of care, and lack of PPC training. Education needs include communication skills and EOL ethical issues with a preference for in-service education.

**Conclusion:** PPC is desired for the care of children at SMCS. Results will inform a multifaceted plan for PPC education, implementation, and inclusion in SMCS' PICU.