

Joint Event

Breast Pathology & Cancer | Gynecology and Obstetrics Pathology | Palliativecare & Gerontology

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Examining the role of specialist palliative care in geriatric-led care: A knowledge, practice and attitudes survey of geriatricians

Background: The global population is ageing, and rates of multimorbidity and chronic illness are rapidly rising. Given specialist palliative care (SPC) has been shown to improve overall care and reduce health care costs, how best to provide SPC to older people is important.

Objectives: The aim of the study is to examine the knowledge, attitudes and practices of geriatricians in providing palliative care (PC), and working with SPC services. Specifically, to understand referral practices, experiences, barriers to SPC integration and models for integrated care. And also aim to capture self-reported knowledge, confidence and satisfaction providing PC.

Methods: A prospective cross-sectional study surveying Australasian geriatricians was conducted. This was a voluntary anonymous online survey, distributed to all full members of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Geriatric Medicine.

Results: One hundred and sixty eight (168) completed responses were received, 58.3% were female and 36.6% had over 20 year's clinical experience. Most (85%) geriatricians reported caring for patients in their last 12-months of life represented a substantial or most of their practice. Geriatricians overwhelmingly believed they should coordinate care (84%), and derived satisfaction from providing PC (95%), and 69% believed all patients with advanced illness should receive concurrent SPC. Regarding PC knowledge, participants scored an average of 13.5 correct answers out of 18. The most poorly answered question related to the themes of psychiatric problems and pain management.

Conclusions: Geriatricians enjoy providing generalist PC to their patients, however potential exists for improved collaborations with SPC services, which may aid knowledge and confidence gaps identified in this study and care delivery.

Biography

Fiona I Runacres is a Palliative Care Specialist, working at Calvary Health Care Bethlehem and Monash Health in Melbourne. As a Clinician, she works in inpatient, consultation and community palliative care services, and within the state-wide progressive neurological disease service at Bethlehem focusing on neuro-palliative care. She enjoys clinical teaching, and holds Adjunct Lecturer appointments with Monash University and The University of Notre Dame. She is an early career Researcher with interests in palliative rehabilitation and models of integrating specialist palliative care.

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