Enhancing the knowledge, attitude and practice of nursing staff in Surgical Palliative Care Service in Hong Kong

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Introduction
In the past, it was hard to imagine that palliative service could be provided in the surgical department. Fortunately, since April 2013, with donations, 8 surgical palliative beds (both genders) have been set up in 2 ward cubicles of an acute surgical ward. It aims at providing care and intervention for relieving patients' physical symptoms and psychological burden, in particular, pain control. It also helps honoring patient dignity and respect at their end of life. A questionnaire survey was done in December 2013 to understand staff’s awareness and their concepts about Surgical Palliative Care (SPAL) service. The results showed that only 41% of nurses knew the service well; 52% understood the service flow; and around 75% agreed that the service was helpful to patients/families and made them comfortable.

Objectives
(1) Increase the awareness of nursing staff towards surgical palliative care (2) Promote staff’s understanding about SPAL service and its service flow (3) Enhance knowledge and skills in caring for patient with terminal illness

Methodology
An educational talk was held in which aim of service, admission criteria, transferring system, ward environment, standardized treatment/care forms, palliative assessment, bereavement counseling, commonly used drugs and subcutaneous analgesic infusion were explained in detail. In addition, a service flow chart was designed and posted in all surgical wards to facilitate their understanding on arranging service consultation and bed booking. Besides, information folders related to SPAL service were introduced which served as a reference guide for all nursing staff. Supplementary information were also kept in the folders, such as ascetic clinic referral, funeral
information, child bereavement, advanced directives, spiritually support and organ
donation arrangement. A post-education questionnaire survey was conducted in June
2014 to see the outcomes.

**Result**
The response rate was about 80%. Significant improvements were noted in all items,
such as: (1) 88% claimed that they knew the service well (2) 91% of nurses
understood the service flow (3) 91% agreed that the service was helpful to
patients/families (4) 91% believed that comfort care had been provided Conclusion:
Through this program, the concepts of SPAL service can be well passed to all nursing
staff. With nurses becoming more confident in promoting this care pathway, more
patients with terminal illness can benefit from the service.