Nurses' Perception on the Effectiveness of End of Life Care Service in the Acute Medical Ward Setting

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Keywords:
end of life
acute medicine

Introduction
In 2009, 1844 patients spent their last hours in the acute medical wards in Department of Medicine in QEH. Majority of these patients would not have had any contact with palliative care service during their illness. In addition, the busy acute ward setting also made the delivery of end of life care even more difficult. The Palliative care team (PCT) was formed in late 2009 to meet the needs of these dying patients. Daily proactive nurse ward round was provided by 2 trained nurses (1APN & 1RN) to 13 medical wards. Appropriate patients were identified for EoL service by assessment tools or by ward referral. Nurses from PCT would provide coordinated care including symptom control, psychological support as well as preparation for both patients and their families. They would also support the ward nurses for delivery of EOL nursing care.

Objectives
To assess the perception of the nurses in the acute medical wards on the EOL care service provided by PCT

Methodology
A structured questionnaire consisting of 11 questions was distributed to the nurses via their respective ward managers. Respondents were invited to give their opinion using a 5-points Likert type scale (1 = “Strongly disagree”, 2 = “Disagree”, 3 = “Neutral”, 4 = “Agree” and 5 = “Strongly agree”).

Result
Ninety-one (30%) of the 304 nurses working in the medical wards were recruited and the response rate was 92.31% (84). Eighty-one (96.75%) of the respondents were satisfied with the PCT service and all items achieved a mean score at 4.4 or above (range: 4.43 – 4.63) which was above the satisfied level. All respondents were aware of the nurses of the PCT and 98.81% (83) nurses knew how to contact the nurses of
Eight-three (98.81%) nurses felt the PCT was able to provide appropriate EOL care for patients and their carer. Among the 22 reflective responses, 63.64% (14) of them showed appreciation or support on PCT. Some 31.82% (7) also felt that extra manpower was needed in order for more patients to benefit from the service.

Conclusion Nurses perceived PCT provided appropriate EOL care and support to patients and their families in the acute medical wards.