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Evaluation of a nurse-led phone enquiry service for advanced cancer patients in hospice day centre

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Introduction

Over the past decade, management of advanced cancer patients has shifted from inpatient towards ambulatory model. Therefore, provision of telephone enquiry hotline and triage service has become an important component of today's oncologic nursing practice. In Kowloon Central Cluster Queen Elizabeth Hospital Hospice Day Center, telephone enquiry hotline and triage service has been launched since Nov 2011. Patient are encouraged to phone back to the Hospice Day Center, and two advanced practice nurses are responsible for responding to the telephone enquiry. Telephone enquiry on symptom control is handled according to the protocols for symptom management. These protocols cover the common symptoms in advanced cancer patients, such as pain, constipation and anorexia. Besides, nurses provide a triage service by advancing follow up or refer patient to AED if needed.

Objectives

To evaluate the outcomes of the nurse-led telephone enquiry hotline and triage service for advanced cancer patients in hospice day centre.

Methodology

A prospective study was conducted to evaluate the telephone enquiry hotline service. Data was collected from July 2012 to Oct 2012 using a standardized data record form to study the contents of the telephone enquiries, the nursing interventions provided and the response time to these enquiries. All telephone enquires during that time period were included for analysis.

Result

During the 4-month interval, there were 91 phone calls enquiring for 100 problems. "Pain and other symptoms" was the leading problem (40%), followed by request to change follow-up appointment date (17%), enquiry related to medications (14%) and

enquiry on community resources (11%). There were 113 nursing interventions in response to these problems. Appointment date was changed in response to all the 20 requests. Of the 11 enquiries on community resources, relevant information was provided in 5 enquiries and referral to related allied healthcare providers was made in the remaining 6 enquiries. For the 40 problems related to pain and other symptoms, nursing interventions include advancement of follow-up appointment (61.2%), advice to attend AED (20.4%), education on symptom management (16.3%) and psychological counseling (2.0%). For medication-related problems, nursing interventions include drug education (64.7%) and advancement of follow-up appointment (35.3%). Of the 91 phone calls, 42 (46.2%) were replied immediately, 28 (30.8%) between 1- 60 minutes, 12 (13.2%) between 1-2 hours, 3 (3.3%) between 2-3 hours and 3 (3.3%) between 3-4 hours. Telephone enquiry service provides a flexible channel in response to patients' needs in ambulatory setting. It effectively triages care according to patients' needs by providing education on symptom management and medication, adjusting follow-up appointment date as well as making appropriate referral to allied healthcare providers.