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A Mortuary Survey to evaluate the Quality of the hospital Last Journey: Impact on service planning to improve families' experience

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Introduction

In Hong Kong 80% of deaths occurs in public hospitals. So far there is no study to evaluate the next-of-kin (NOK) experience and satisfaction after hospital death.

Objectives

In order to better understand the feelings, needs and expectations of NOK for quality improvement and service planning, we conducted the first family satisfaction survey in the mortuary to assess the journey after patient death.

Methodology

We carried out a cross-sectional questionnaire survey through interview in the mortuary of Queen Mary Hospital, Hong Kong. Adult family members who collected the bodies were invited for a consented survey during the period 1 September to 31 December 2015.

Result

Of the 225 eligible families, 190 (84%) questionnaires were completed. There was an overall positive NOK experience. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest satisfaction), the overall mean satisfaction score was 3.43. The service was rated satisfactory or above by 65% of responses. When assessing the ward-bedside and mortuary care separately, mortuary part tends to have a higher satisfaction score than ward-bedside part (3.45 vs 3.30). Relatively lower scores, which suggest room for improvement, were identified. They include communication with physicians about the death, the mortuary environment, duration of bedside stay after patient death and body condition on collecting the body. The interaction provided by mortuary staff received the highest satisfaction score. In conclusion, the journey after patient death is positive for NOK

within the hospital. Areas of improvement are found from NOKs' perspectives. Further studies are needed to identify the underlying factors for those aspects with relatively lower score. The survey provides important insights for the hospital management and frontline healthcare staff to improve service after hospital deaths. With the increasing deaths due to ageing population, the survey is a pilot to shape service strategy related to the last journey of end-of-life care.