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Exploring the Percieved Challenges to End-of-life Care Among Health Professionals and Family Carers in Long Term Care Setting

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Introduction

There has been growing concern about the palliative care needs of patients with severe cognitive impairment in long-term care (LTC) setting. Due to the difficulties in prognostication and lack of open discussion about the care preferences in their last phase of life, health professionals and family carers might have diverse views on how to optimize the patient care.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to identify the challenges in the provision of end-of-life care (EoL) for people with severe cognitive impairment in a long term care setting from the perspectives of health professionals and family carers.

Methodology

Qualitative interviews were conducted from December 2014 to February 2016 with a purposive sample of 20 relatives of patients with severe cognitive impairment and 20 health professionals involved in their care to explore their experiences, needs and concerns.

Result

Result(s):

The major challenges perceived by the health care professionals in providing EoL care in LTC setting were related to self-efficacy, timing, readiness of family members, and mental capacity of patients, whereas the common concerns among family carers

were lack of awareness towards poor prognosis and alternatives, and their right to choices.

Conclusion:

The findings of the study suggest that a number of strategies, including staff training, interdisciplinary communication, and tailored model of care delivery, are needed to better support health professionals and family carers to enhance EoL care for patients in LTC setting. In addition, EOL care issues were seldom brought to open discussion. There is an urgent need to develop a culturally-specific family-centered Advance Care Planning (ACP) program to better prepare the family carers.