

Project Title	Measuring Quality of Death in Canberra Health Services 2019
Supervisor	Toni Ashmore
Address	Canberra Hospital, Yamba Drive, Garran
Telephone	51248512
Email	Toni.ashmore@act.gov.au

Lead discipline (please select one)

Nursing

Allied Health

Medicine

Pre-clinical

Health Economics

Biostatistics

Value-based Healthcare

Epidemiology

Outline of the project

As outlined by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission), the health care that people receive in the last years, months and weeks of their lives can minimise the distress and grief associated with death and dying for the individual, and their family, friends and carers.(1) However, many acute hospitals are often focused on diagnosis and treatment with a view to cure a patient, this leading to those approaching the end of their life and in need of end of life interventions such as conversations about their goals of care, a palliative approach to care, or provision of terminal care – can be delayed or not occur. This delay can result in a level of care and communication that contributes to less than optimal end-of-life care (1).

As a means of improving care at the end of life, in 2015 the Commission developed a National consensus statement: essential elements for safe and high-quality end-of-life care (Consensus Statement).(2) The Consensus Statement sets out suggested practice for end-of-life care in settings where acute care is provided and focuses on core processes of care and organisational prerequisites for delivering high-quality end-of-life care. One of the elements within the Consensus Statement relates to evaluation, audit and feedback. The implementing of the Consensus Statement is now included as part of the National Quality and Safety Health Services Standards (second edition) and which health services will be audited against in further accreditations.

In 2018 the Health Round Table asked health services to trial the use of the Canterbury Quality of Death audit tool to audit the quality of care for a patient in their last 48 hours. This tool collects quality of death indicators including symptom management and also assigns a score. Canberra Health Services trialled the use of the tool and commenced using it as an annual audit tool in 2019.

ACT Palliative Care Governance Committee would like to audit 100 patient files from Canberra Health Services and up to 100 patient files from Calvary Public Hospital Bruce (depending on outcome of ethics application) using the same tool this year. The student will be undertaking the audit of both service records for deaths (excluding maternal and mental health patient deaths). The student will be required in conjunction with the supervisor to analyse themes that arise from the audit of cases and prepare recommendations in the form of a report for the ACT Palliative Care Governance Committee. The student will also be asked to identify challenges that may arise in using the tools to feed back into national development work on audit tools in palliative care.

Ethics will be required to be sought for this project, and will be undertaken prior to the student commencing.

- (1) Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Summary report: Results of pilot of end-of-life care audit and survey tools. Sydney: ACSQHC; 2016.
- (2) Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. National consensus statement: essential elements for safe and high-quality end-of-life care. Sydney: ACSQHC, 2015.

Proposed research methods

Research Question:

What is the quality of end of life care and palliative care at The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce?

Objective:

The overarching aim of the project is to assess the practice of end of life care and palliative care at The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce. The three specific objectives to achieve this aim are to:

1. Audit a sample of 100 deaths using the QOD audit tool, and through identifying factors such as physical (ward) location and length of admission on care for decedent patients,
2. Describe current practice and concerns identified through the audit.

Outcome Measures:

The QOD audit tool identifies outcome measures for physical, cultural, spiritual and after death care needs. The QOD audit also allows a score out of 32 to be calculated, with higher scores indicating a death is more likely to have attended to the patient's physical, cultural, spiritual and after death care needs.

Study Type & Design & Schedule:

Design

This quantitative research study will audit patient records to examine the documentation of end of life and palliative care provision in the patient files for 200 consecutive deaths in The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce.

Data Collection

A clinical audit using the QOD audit tool will review clinical records utilising ACTPAS and the CRIS clinical database to collect information on documented end-of-life decisions and aspects of treatment during the last 48 hours of life. Files meeting the criteria will be identified through ACTPAS by Medical Records and provided to the research team excluding mental health will also be reviewed using the QOD tool. A demographic analysis will be undertaken on completion of 200 files.

Data Analysis

Data analysis will be undertaken by SPSS statistical package. Comparable patient characteristics such as gender, age, and type of admission will be identified by the audit tools. The data collected will allow a wide range of analyses to be conducted, including the following:

The proportion of patients receiving documented palliative, acute and intensive medical interventions will be reported and compared across cohorts using the chi-squared test between initiation of comfort care to the time of death. These outcomes can be compared between the four cohorts using linear regression or Cox proportional hazards regression (depending on the nature of the available data). A series of multiple regression analyses will be used to establish the relative contribution of demographic, ward, clinician and family factors to the provision of palliative, acute and intensive medical interventions.

Preferred study discipline being undertaken by the student

Any discipline

Potential benefits to the student and to the department

Student:

- Develop research and analysis skills
- Gain an understanding of ACT Health record keeping
- Participate in audit tool analysis
- Develop knowledge of quality of death for further application in clinical settings

Canberra Health Services and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce:

- Data collection and analysis of data on end of life care and quality of death in the Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce.
- Recommendations to inform the implementation of an End of Life Care work plan.

Department within ACT Health Directorate / Canberra Health Services where the student will be based

Territory wide End of Life and Palliative Care under Cancer and Ambulatory Services

Please submit form to preclinical.research@act.gov.au