Rural Palliative Care Program National Evaluation Project: Patient and Carer Experiences

Abstract:
Palliative care services in Australia are provided across a range of inpatient, outpatient and community settings by a mix of specialist and generalist providers from the public and private sectors. There is little evidence to guide the provision of palliative care in rural areas.

The National Palliative Care Program, through the Australian Divisions of General Practice, funded the Rural Palliative Care Program (RPCP) in 8 sites across Australia to implement a model of rural palliative care known as the GAPS (Griffith Area Palliative Care Service) model.

As part of the RPCP National Evaluation Project, patient and carer experiences were collected from patients and their carers accessing palliative care services in participating project locations.

Patient experiences were collected by using a modified version of the Patient Outcome Scale. The questionnaire covers: physical symptoms, psychological symptoms, spiritual considerations, practical concerns, emotional concerns and psychosocial needs.

Carer experiences were collected using the Care Experiences With Palliative Care Survey. The questionnaire covers: Carer needs, information, equipment and support, relationship with palliative care staff, respite and grief support.

Patients and carers were also asked to provide comments on what made their Quality of Life better or worse.

Surveys were collected from patients and carers enrolled in the service in early 2005 and patients enrolled in late 2006. A total of 186 patient experience surveys and 139 carer experience surveys from six projects were collected.

Combined results of patient and carer responses from the RPCP National Evaluation Project patient and carer experience survey tools will be presented along with themes and comments on what influenced their quality of life.