

Key messages for PCOC services, clinicians and researchers

There is a significant body of evidence from the [Australian Palliative Care Outcomes Collaboration](#), that Australian palliative care has achieved statistically [significant improvements](#) over the last decade in pain and other end of life symptoms. This is due to several factors linked to more effective palliative care, including thorough and regular assessments of patient and family / carer needs.

Evidence for palliative care

The evidence shows palliative care is highly effective.

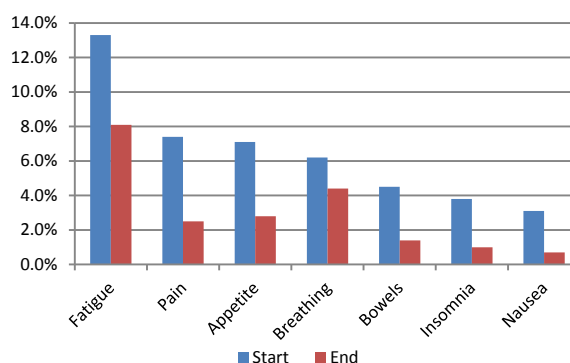
Fatigue is the most common symptom that causes patients distress – in 2016, 13.3% of patients reported feeling severe distress due to fatigue at the start of their palliative care. This was followed by pain (7.4%) and appetite (7.1%) problems. Distress from fatigue and appetite is not surprising as a loss of energy and appetite is common as death approaches. For the vast majority of people, pain can be effectively managed.

How many people receive palliative care?

Each year in Australia, about [160,000 people die](#) and around 120,000 of these deaths are predictable (estimate calculated by the authors using the methodology [developed by F. Murtagh](#)). PCOC estimates that only about 40,000 people receive specialist palliative care per year.

What are the experiences of patients in their last few days of life?

Over 80% of patients receiving palliative care do not have severe symptoms at the time of death. Only a small proportion experience severe symptoms and evidence shows these symptoms either become absent or mild as death approaches. When patients are referred to palliative care about 9% experience severe pain but this reduces to approximately 2% prior to death. Patients in their final days and hours receiving palliative care experience less pain, symptoms and problems than earlier in their illness.



How is PCOC information used?

Clinicians use the information PCOC produces to measure the effectiveness of the care they provide and to continually improve the palliative care provided to patients and their families.

Contact us on 02 4221 5092 or visit our website www.pcoc.org.au