

Timely Access and Seamless Transitions

Policy brief 5: Care Setting Transitions Report

Background

Investigators: Drs. Donna M. Wilson, Roger Thomas, and Kathy Kovacs-Burns and post-doctoral and graduate/undergraduate student researchers

Rationale: Several studies have described barriers to palliative care; however, no reported studies have explored the creative ways that patients, informal active and bereaved caregivers, and health care professionals have overcome access barriers.

Objectives: Care setting transitions are a serious, yet largely overlooked, issue in P/EOL care. To date, research does not appear to have focused on the numbers, types, nor reasons for the relocations that are a common experience for terminally ill/dying persons as their care needs or care situations change. A small number of studies have suggested rural residents are likely to experience considerable care setting transitions, including those involving much travel.

Design: Mixed-method: quantitative (secondary analysis of population health services use data and survey data); qualitative (phenomenology).

Regions Involved: Alberta

Outcomes: a) This study will quantify care setting transfers in the last year of life, and provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of these transfers from a care recipient's perspective -- with this work bridging a large evidence gap in understanding and improving upon P/EOL care transitions; b) Training - 1 PhD student (in 2008), 1 Master's student (in 2009).

The intended outcomes were realized, as illustrated by the two publications from this project, both in open access journals. The two articles are based on an analysis of Alberta hospital and other health service utilization data as well as online data and interviews of rural persons, with clear and fact based information developed on transfers in the last year of life. As shown and described in the two reports, some major differences exist on transfers in the last year of life in respect to age (younger and older) and living location (rural or urban). The additional outcome of student training was readily accomplished, with D Mohankumar (Post-doctoral fellow), JA Hewitt (Undergraduate student), Jane Osei-Waree (Masters student), and Sandy Robertson (Masters student) receiving research training and training with research dissemination.

Wilson, D., Thomas, R., Kovacs Burns, K., Hewitt, J.A., Osei-Waree, J., & Robertson, S. (2012). Canadian rural-urban differences in end-of-life care setting transitions. *Global Journal of Health Science*, 4(5), 1-14 and 2012 (*online journal*). Doi: 10.5539/gjhs.v4n5pl

Wilson, D. M., Hewitt, J. A., Thomas, R., Mohankumar, D., & Kovacs Burns, K. (2011). Age-based differences in care setting transitions over the last year of life. *Current Gerontology and Geriatrics Research*, 2011, article ID 101276, 7 pages. DOI: 10.1155/2011/11276.

