Introduction

ACCORD Hospice, in association with the Robertson Trust, has employed a registered nurse on a fixed term contract to build on an existing educational outreach to local care homes. One stream of this work is the Hospice Partners Initiative (HPI).

The aim of the HPI is:

• to share knowledge,
• to undertake projects with a palliative focus,
• and offer support to implement validated palliative frameworks and tools.

One of the HPI projects has been The Abbey Pain Project.

Background to The Abbey Pain Project

Research suggests that older people tend to experience worse symptoms than their younger counterparts, particularly at the end of life.

• Of particular concern is the under-recognition and under-assessment of pain.

• Older adults with pain often experience other problems including: depression, appetite disturbance and reduced quality of life.

• The possibility of achieving good pain management is further complicated when communication is restricted by cognitive impairment, or other communication difficulties such as stroke.

Aims of the Abbey Pain Project

1. To encourage care home staff to reflect on their current practice.
3. To promote the use of validated pain assessment tools, such as the Abbey Pain Assessment Tool.

Methods

1. Three education sessions were offered to link staff who regularly attend the HPI meetings.
   a. On average 15 staff from 10 care homes, (approximately 0.75% of total staff group) attended the initial education sessions.

2. Hospice Partner Care Homes were offered an opportunity to participate in a snapshot survey of current practice.
   a. 11 Care Homes opted to participate.
   b. A 10% random sample of case notes were selected for review, (n=77).
   c. Care home staff participated in a short structured interview (n=77).

   Questions were asked about staff confidence and previous education in pain assessment; perceptions about pain in particular residents; and pain assessment tools being used in the care home.

Discussion

• Staff reported high levels of confidence in assessing pain.

• However, 29% of residents who were asked reported that they were experiencing pain on the day of the survey.

• Only 6% of residents were having their pain assessed using a pain assessment tool.

Outcome

• The results of the snapshot survey were presented to care home managers.

• Follow up education sessions were offered.

• 111 staff from 18 care homes (approximately 5.55% of total staff group) attended.

• Ongoing education is available through the Introduction to Palliative Care for Care Home Staff courses which run regularly at ACCORD Hospice.

References:


