Implementing the Carer Support Needs Assessment Tool (CSNAT) in a Community Palliative Care Setting

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Introduction

• The Carer Support Needs Assessment Tool (CSNAT) is a 16-item tool that provides a comprehensive measure of carer support needs for use in the community palliative care setting.(1) (Figure 1)
• Carers can use the CSNAT to identify the support they need to enable them to care for someone at home; or to support their own wellbeing within their caregiving role.(2)

Aims

To explore the perspectives of Community palliative care clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) on the implementation of the CSNAT in a community specialist palliative care service.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 palliative care CNSs from two specialist palliative care community nursing teams in Lothian, Scotland. Data was audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed using a framework approach.

Results

• Approaches to administering the CSNAT were varied – some CNSs’ left the tool with carers to complete alone, whilst others completed it with carers as part of a conversation.
• The CSNAT is often used once only; few participants mentioned review over time.
• Few CNSs generated formal carer support plans; supportive input was provided informally.
• The CSNAT was perceived to be effective in creating a space for conversations around carer support, which less experienced nurses found particularly helpful.

Conclusions & Recommendations

• Carer support is viewed as an essential element of the CNS role, and the CSNAT, when used as an adjunct to existing practice, was deemed acceptable by CNSs.
• The healthcare professional is encouraged to introduce the CSNAT to support carers, recognising it will not always be completed or reviewed for different reasons.
• Education and training is recommended, particularly in relation to shared action plan and review phases.
• Early referral of patients for palliative care and early intervention using the CSNAT with carers.
• Identify a CSNAT Champion within the nursing team.
• Improve the appearance of the CSNAT.

References:
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