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Communication and comfort measures for people with Dementia at end of life: Integrating specialist services in community settings

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As a consequence of an increasing elderly population the incidence of those living and dying with dementia is increasing with demands for quality care throughout the health and social care sector. This study involved delivery of workshops to care home staff specifically for improving communication and comfort measures at end of life for people with dementia and evaluating their effect three months later to assess whether these approaches had been embedded into practice.

Semi structured interviews were undertaken 3 months following the workshops to assess whether practice had been effected by the skills and knowledge developed in the workshops. A number of themes emerged including listening and understanding; peer support; empowerment and confidence; communications; making an early start; building trust, the wider team and documentation.

Through promoting confidence in the approaches they were taking and a realisation that communicating is the core of compassionate care the care home staff were empowered to provide effective multidisciplinary palliative care for their residents with dementia. This team approach ensured appropriate support was available at end of life within these care homes where the person wished to be with familiar people and surroundings which ultimately promoted client choice.

Biography

Kay Donnellon is a senior lecturer within the University of Cumbria in advanced clinical practice and palliative care in both undergraduate and post graduate programmes. After a long career in community and primary care, palliative care has remained a passion and has allowed her to develop collaborative working arrangements with local hospices assisting in accrediting modules with them. She is a current PhD student researching quality in out of hours services where she is an active member of her local clinical governance group as well as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner.

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