

# Advanced Practice Nurse Collaboration with an Established Community-Based Palliative Care Model

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## Background

- Palliative care (PC) is a philosophy of care for patients with life-limiting illness that addresses physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs to anticipate, prevent and treat suffering and improve quality of life<sup>5</sup>
- PC improves healthcare utilization and patient outcomes<sup>1</sup>
- Unfortunately, the majority of PC services exist in the inpatient setting, which do not meet the needs of patients along the trajectory of illness<sup>6</sup>
- Healthcare systems are expanding the provision of PC delivery to patients' homes through community-based palliative care programs (CBPC)<sup>2</sup>
- Advance practice nurses (APN), due to their training and scope of practice, are in an excellent position to provide the holistic care essential to PC practice<sup>4</sup>
- This evidence-based practice (EBP) project was based on the IOWA model, a practical, step-wise approach to integrating evidence into practice

## Specific Aims

- To evaluate a collaborative PC model that utilizes an APN within an existing CBPC team
- To examine the impact of this model of care on care coordination and patient outcomes (e.g., 30-day readmissions and emergency department (ED) utilization)
- It was expected that the findings would provide a framework for collaboration between the APN and the CBPC team as well as a framework for future PC program growth

## Methods

### Study Design

- A mixed methods approach was used to examine the impact of the APN on the CBPC team as well as the patient 30-day readmission rates and ED utilization

### Qualitative Analysis

- PC team members participated in focus groups examining the APN contribution to the CBPC team
- The APN was observed during patient visits with CBPC staff and interdisciplinary team (IDT) meetings

## Methods (cont'd)

### Quantitative Analysis

- A retrospective review of the electronic health record (EHR) was conducted comparing 30-day readmissions and ED visits of PC patients receiving care before and after the addition of the APN:
- June 1, 2017-September 30, 2017 (N=27)
- June 1, 2018-September 30, 2018 (N=44)

### Sample and Setting

- CBPC team members (N=6) interested in participating in a one-hour focus group to discuss the role of the APN
- Patients (N=71) receiving CBPC in the Southwest region of a large Midwest not-for profit health care system
- Patients were primarily white (91.5%), married (47.9%), over age 65 (88.7%), with a primary diagnosis of cancer (42.3%)

### IRB approval

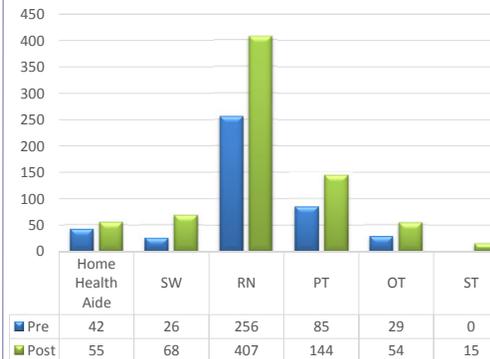
- The project was submitted to the Internal Review Board (IRB) pre-review process at both University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) and Aurora Health Care. Each site determined the project to be EBP, not research, and was therefore approved for implementation

## Results

- The APN was observed to provide support in all domains of palliative care, improved care coordination and communication at IDT meetings
- Findings from the CBPC focus groups indicate the APN played an important and unique role on the team. The APN improved staff education, contributed to complex patient management/care coordination, and provided timely medical interventions
- There was a significant difference (increase) in the number of social services visits during timeframe with APN involvement ( $p=0.001$ )
- No significant difference was found in 30-day readmissions ( $p=0.286$ ) or emergency room visits ( $p=0.506$ ) with APN involvement



## Number of Interdisciplinary Visits



## Conclusions

- The addition of an APN was associated with an increase in social services visits
- Staff valued the APN contribution to the palliative care team and felt a dedicated provider elevated the provision of palliative care services
- The addition of the APN did not have a significant impact on patient outcomes in this sample

## Limitations

- Small data samples and inconsistent APN involvement (involved in 56.8 % of patients in the second studied time period) were limitations to the quantitative data analysis
- Focus group participation rate of 40% was a limitation to the qualitative data analysis
- Staff report social services increase may be due to programmatic changes

## Implications

- Increased social service visits suggest the APN role enhanced coordination of care, psychosocial support, and advanced care planning
- Examining APN referrals and resource utilization over a longer period of time will clarify the APNs contributions to a PC team
- Further study is needed to evaluate the impact of social services interventions

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