

Aged Care Allied Health Toolkit

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Background

Ageing in the population is increasing demand for aged care services which includes increasing palliative care demand and need for care at the end of life. Allied health professionals (AHPs) have a key role in supporting older people to optimise physical and cognitive function through to the end of life.

However, earlier studies [1-2] had shown AHPs may lack confidence and competence in delivering care at the end of life. A lack of resources specific to each of the individual allied health disciplines within the aged care context compounds these issues.



Aim

The aim of this project was to identify evidence and practice resources and co-design an allied health toolkit for the End of Life Directions in Aged Care (ELDAC) Project.

Methods

Four phases of activity were undertaken:

1. Environmental scan for existing palliative care resources, tools, guidance, and policy documents relevant to AHPs working in aged care
2. Scoping review of what evidence exists to support palliative allied health practice within community and residential aged care settings
3. Co-design of the structure and content for an allied health toolkit enabled through an expert allied health working group
4. Evaluation included formative evaluation (card sorting exercise and user testing activities) and post release evaluation using web metric analysis and stakeholder interviews.

Results

Findings from the scoping review [3] and environmental scan identified a limited set of palliative care resources and evidence-based knowledge on best practice in aged care. Relevant evidence resources have been included in the Guidance and Research pages of the new toolkit.

Eighteen AHPs participated in co-design activities that shaped the content, design and navigation of the toolkit. End user needs highlighted through co-design included information needs of different groups (e.g. new to aged care) and knowledge specific to the individual allied health profession. The need for actionable resources and resources that AHPs could share with older people and families was raised.



For AHPs interested in improving their skills in palliative care, the ELDAC Allied Health Toolkit contains resources to support best practice, including forms to identify patient needs and allied health referral; links to AHP websites to find local AHPs; and discipline specific information that can support care provided to an older adult receiving palliative care.



Web metrics show the toolkit is being accessed and used. AHPs are actively participating and sharing their knowledge and practice.

References

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