



Palliative Care
Coalition of Canada
Coalition canadienne
pour les soins palliatifs

Advocacy Brief: The Need for Training and Education in Palliative Care

Palliative care is a fundamental human right that is essential for improving the quality of life for individuals diagnosed with a life-limiting illness and their families. The growing demand for palliative care services in Canada is driven by an aging population, advances in medicine, and a desire for patient-centered care. Meeting the demand for palliative care is urgent and can improve the healthcare system and ensure patients receive quality care.

Benefits of Palliative and End-of- Life Care

The holistic approach of palliative care offers several benefits, including improved quality of life, symptom management, grief and bereavement care, advance care planning, interdisciplinary care, emotional and spiritual support, integrated complementary health care, caregiver support and increased patient satisfaction. This comprehensive approach addresses the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of a patient's well-being, making their remaining time more comfortable and meaningful.

Importance of Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Education

Palliative care is most effective when delivered by an interprofessional team that includes a range of healthcare professionals with different skills and expertise. In addition to healthcare professionals, caregivers are essential members of an interdisciplinary palliative care team. Often family members or close friends, caregivers provide practical and emotional support to patients who are facing serious illness. Developing core competencies and understanding of a palliative approach to care in all practice settings for all members of the care team is essential to provide integrated palliative care.

Call to Action

We urge the federal government to prioritize the following actions for training and education in palliative and end-of-life care:

1. Support interdisciplinary collaboration and team-based care in palliative care through funding and policy initiatives.
2. Develop national standards for palliative care education and allocate funding to implement them across all healthcare sectors and professions.
3. Integrate palliative care competencies into healthcare education at undergraduate and graduate levels.
4. Direct funding towards the adoption of training programs for healthcare professionals, concentrating on cultural competence and inclusive care, in order to better serve underserved and difficult-to-reach populations.
5. Provide incentives for healthcare professionals and organizations to access continuous palliative care education and training.
6. Commit resources to the improvement and widespread adoption of current educational and training materials for caregivers.
7. Scale evidence and competency-based educational solutions to improve access to and quality of palliative care for Canadians.

The need for high-quality palliative and end-of-life care is urgent, and requires immediate action. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the gaps in skills, training, and education in the healthcare workforce, causing distress to patients, families, and healthcare professionals alike. The federal government must prioritize investment in palliative care education and training, and continue advancing the goal of supporting health system quality by improving palliative care skills and supports for healthcare providers, families, caregivers, and communities, as outlined in the 2019 Action Plan on Palliative Care.

The Palliative Care Coalition of Canada (PCCC) is a group of 35+ national stakeholder organizations dedicated to improving end-of-life care for all Canadians. The Coalition believes that all Canadians have the right to quality hospice palliative care, including grief and bereavement supports. This advocacy brief was created by member of the PCCC Education Committee. (May 2023)