

## **Developing Nurses as Palliative Care Advocates through Education**

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**Statement of the Problem:** Nurses often feel unprepared to advocate for palliative care (PC) for patients and may benefit from access to education aimed at increasing knowledge of and comfort with PC.

**Background/Literature Review:** A search of relevant evidence from 2014-2018 was performed using PubMed, Google Scholar, Society of Hospital Medicine, and Up-to-Date. No date limitations were utilized for “nursing PC referrals” and “surprise question”. Although research supported nurses as PC advocates, it also revealed common barriers, including deficits in knowledge, PC screening tools, and communications skills.

**Purpose:** To determine if a quality improvement project featuring combined didactic/interactive material can improve nurses’ knowledge of PC, skill in using PC screening tools, and comfort in requesting PC consult.

**Methods/Measures:** A one-hour PC educational session, combining didactic information, small group work, and readers’ theater was presented to nurses at a small rural hospital. Nurses completed a post course 11-item survey, that enabled them to rate pre/post course competencies. Analysis focused on the change in perception of competencies associated with advocating for PC.

**Findings:** Twenty-nine nurses attended one of three educational sessions offered in Fall 2018. Ninety seven percent of the respondents believed they had the ability to describe basic PC principles after the course versus 45% beforehand. Familiarity and confidence with using the BOOST criteria to identify PC patients climbed from 10% to 100%. Nurses’ self-reported ability to describe PC patient characteristics and to use communication skills to advocate for referral rose from 21% to 100%. Respondents (97%) were more comfortable with identifying patients and requesting a PC consult after participating in the session.

**Conclusions/Implications for Practice:** A one-hour PC educational session can increase a nurse’s comfort and ability to act as PC advocate. Phase two of the QI project will monitor the impact on PC referrals.