

Palliative Care Delivery in Rural Newfoundland and Labrador

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Statement of the Problem: There exists considerable need for palliative care (PC) specialty in rural Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) where the population is aging and provision/accessibility to PC and hospice services is inadequate.

Background/Literature Review: Access to appropriate PC and hospice services remains a significant issue in rural NL. Barriers include decreased financial and limited resources, insufficient medical supplies, inadequate cell phone service, travel concerns and isolation. Identifying the needs of these rural communities is paramount to improving the quality and accessibility of PC and hospice services.

Purpose/Aims or Objectives: The purpose of this needs assessment is to examine current PC delivery in rural regions and identify areas necessitating improvement. Recognizing barriers to PC and hospice services and education will inform future practice and aid in its implementation of PC and hospice services in regions of most need.

Methods/Measures: A descriptive survey, comprised of both quantitative and open-ended questions, was adapted from the Rural Hospital Palliative Care Needs Assessment (Fink et al., 2013) and manually distributed by in October 2019 to February 2020 to 150 healthcare providers employed in 2 hospitals and 2 long term care facilities on the Avalon Peninsula of NL.

Findings/Results: The overall response rate was 59%. An alarming 76% identified a need for increased PC and hospice services and 52% were dissatisfied with the current PC services, suggesting a great disparity exists. Of the total respondents, 81% expressed an interest in receiving more PC education with the majority preferring to receive education by participating in a webinar, attending a workshop, and bringing in a PC consultation.

Conclusion/Implications for Practice: Results of the needs assessment highlight the need for improved PC and hospice services and education in rural NL. This information can serve as a means to identify regions most in need and facilitate in the development of an evidenced-based practice model for the provision of PC and hospice services and education in rural NL.