Demystifying Pharmacists' Perceptions of Palliative Care: An Innovative Tool for Educational Development

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Background

• Cancer incidence in most low- and middle-income countries is predicted to double in the next 10 years. While progress has been made in cancer diagnosis and treatment, much remains to be done to improve palliative care (PC) for the majority of patients with cancer who present with advanced disease.1
• Top barriers for access to palliative care services include lack of designated palliative care beds/services, community awareness and staff training.1
• The palliative care population has been identified as one of the groups who are at highest risk of medication misadventure and adverse events, and consequently hospital admissions.
• A common problem encountered for palliative patients is the inability to adequately manage medications, which is a significant issue given that they are used to treat symptoms experienced by the patient, such as pain.3
• Pharmacists, however, are not widely recognized as members of the palliative care health team.4

Objective

• To understand Egyptian pharmacists' perceptions and understandings of PC.
• To educate Egyptian pharmacists about the importance of their role in the care of cancer patients with palliative needs.
• To ascertain the misconceptions and stigma associated with palliative care in the general community population of pharmacists.

Methods

• A two day live educational symposium entitled "Oncology Pharmacy Network" was presented in Cairo, Egypt in December 2014. The symposium included different topics pertinent to palliative care in cancer settings.
• Pre- and post-assessment knowledge questionnaires were administered for the presentation entitled, "Optimal Oncology Care: What’s Palliative Care Got To Do With It?"
• Turning point technologies were used to assess the participants' perception of palliative care services, knowledge of common symptoms in palliative care, and understanding on providing palliative care to cancer patients.

Results

• A total of 157 pharmacists attended the two day symposium.
• Data collected indicate that prior to the presentation, there were many misconceptions in pharmacists' general understanding of palliative care.
• Post-presentation response rates reached 100% across all questions. Additionally, subjective commentary offered from the pharmacists further highlighted the importance of this symposium.

Conclusions

• All participants agreed that palliative healthcare education for pharmacists is a necessary component to ensure proper management of patients who could benefit from palliative care.
• The symposium had a positive impact on pharmacists' perception and knowledge of palliative care principles.
• As the practice of palliative care evolves, and international organizations are promoting access to palliative care, it is equally important to recognize the role of the pharmacists in this field.
• Development of more educational palliative training programs for pharmacists is vital in the overall care of patients and will thus improve overall outcomes.

References


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• Stellar