

PALLIATIVE CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN CARE HOMES: A SURVEY OF CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST WORK

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Study Aim

To describe community palliative care Clinical Nurse Specialists' (CNSs) work with nursing and residential care homes.

Methods

A questionnaire survey was undertaken of community palliative care CNSs working across the United Kingdom. Responses were obtained from 730 CNSs (75% response rate). Data were analysed using the statistical package SPSS 7.5 and the qualitative data analysis package NUD*IST.

Findings

92% (n=672) of respondents had undertaken work with nursing homes and 80% (n=584) of respondents with residential care homes. The work that CNSs undertook involved supporting residents, their relatives and care home staff through direct visits to the homes, telephone support and the distribution of information. The most frequent activities, performed more than once a month, involved direct care for residents. Clinical care was focused upon pain and symptom control. The majority of CNSs worked exclusively with residents with malignant conditions. Indirect work was carried out to develop care practices at the end of life primarily through educational initiatives and link nurses.

Conclusions

In mainly working with residents with cancer, these CNSs were only addressing the end of life needs of a small proportion of residents dying in care homes. Recommendations are made concerning the development an appropriate knowledge base to work with this care sector and the need to provide a cohesive service that involves all health care professionals.