

HEALTH & SAFETY: PALLIATIVE CARE

“General Considerations”

BQIS/Outreach Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual’s health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This is the first of four Fact Sheets regarding Palliative Care.

Objectives

To provide information related to the definition, purpose, care, interventions, and strategies which encompass palliative care.

Definitions

Palliative care: The active, all-encompassing care of people that prevents and provides relief from pain, suffering and discomfort; and maximizes quality of life.

Facts

- The goal of palliative care is to keep the person free from pain, suffering and discomfort or to keep pain, suffering and discomfort sufficiently controlled so it does not interfere with their ability to function or quality of life.
- Each individual communicates pain or discomfort in their own way.
- It is important that caregivers know the signs and symptoms of the individual’s pain.

Signs/ symptoms of pain and discomfort may include:

- Decreased activity
- Restlessness
- Tearfulness, crying
- Moaning
- Sighing
- Grimacing or furrowed brow

- Withdrawal from interaction with others
- Labored breathing
- Guarded or stiffened posture
- Irritability
- Increased behaviors or self injurious behaviors
- Elevated blood pressure, pulse, and respirations
- Anxiety
- Fearfulness
- Anger
- Depression
- Sleep Disturbances
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Additional symptoms depending on the individual

Signs and Symptoms that can contribute to discomfort include:

- Nausea and Vomiting
- Fever
- Intractable hiccups

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Coordinate a variety of health and support services to maximize potential for management of pain, suffering and discomfort.
2. Implement use of a comprehensive Pain Assessment and Pain Rating Scale to measure and ensure pain/discomfort relief and management.
3. Keep the individual's pain under control through frequent assessment and evaluation and implementation of pain relief strategies.
4. Train all staff on all aspects of palliative care including pain monitoring and management and completion of Pain Assessments and Pain Rating Scales.
5. Assess living environment including additional adaptive equipment or positioning devices that may be needed. An Occupational Therapist can help in determining which types may help.
6. Assist and support the individual to maintain functional capacity and independence.
7. Train staff to competency to provide non-medication pain relief measures such as: relaxation measures, back rubs, soft music, and aroma therapy.
8. Refer to palliative care program through local hospital if available and/or to Occupational Therapy and/or Physical Therapy as needed and as ordered by physician for their recommendations for comfort measures to reduce pain and discomfort such as relaxation therapy, heat, diathermy, massage, ROM (Range of Motion) exercises, etc.

9. Ensure there is a Pain Management Protocol or Plan in place including but not limited to:
 - Listing of signs/symptoms of pain and discomfort for the person
 - Unique ways the person expresses pain/discomfort
 - Frequent assessment of discomfort and pain
 - Strategies for addressing discomfort and pain and thresholds for implementation of strategies
 - Means of documenting pain, interventions and reactions

Learning Assessment

Questions that can be used to verify a person's competency in the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. True or False: Palliative care focuses on all aspects of the person's care.
2. True or False: Each individual has their own ways to communicate pain.
3. Some good ways to measure pain include:
 - A. Pain Assessments
 - B. Pain Rating Scales
 - C. Observation for nonverbal signs of pain
 - D. All of the above
4. True or False: Training is not necessary for staff to complete palliative care measures.
5. Pain relief and comfort measures that do not involve medication could include all except:
 - A. A back rub
 - B. Stimulating fast paced music
 - C. Relaxation measures
 - D. Aroma therapy

References

Providence Extended Care Center Protocol for Pain Management

Related Resources

Palliative Care Series Fact Sheets: "Pain Management", "Comfort Measures", "Adaptive Equipment"

Pain Assessment Rating Scale

Pain Management Diary

Learning Assessment Answers

1. True
2. True
3. D
4. False
5. B

Outreach Services

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