

## Paper 6 Summary: The Impact of Measuring Outcome Indicators on Quality of and Access to Palliative Care

### Question

Does measuring indicators that address desired outcomes, including patient/family reported outcomes and experience, improve the quality of and access to palliative care?

### Summary

Measurement is necessary for improvement, but measuring performance in palliative care is complex: Care gets delivered in a variety of sites and measurements have to capture aspects important to patients and families.

**This paper discusses the role of measuring outcomes in palliative care and reviews the research on the effectiveness of doing so on the patient and family experience and clinical outcomes.**

The most important measures look at outcomes - what has been achieved at the level of the patient and system level. There is evidence that using patient surveys can improve quality of life. While other countries have established frameworks for measuring palliative care, Canada is at the beginning stages of developing a series of common benchmarks and common ways to collect and report on patient surveys. The author believes that the data could be available nationally; Accreditation Canada standards recommend that organizations track performance measures for hospice and palliative care patients and this information could be collected and analyzed nationally.

### Review Findings

- Quality indicators are effective and quick tools for assessing service performance at individual, program, regional, national and international levels. They have demonstrated value in improving outcomes and the quality of care.
- In clinical care outcome measures are used to: monitor symptom intensity, functional status, quality of life; aid in decision making; facilitate communication between team members and patients/families; and to evaluate effectiveness of treatments.
- According to the Ipsos poll, a majority of Canadians think that family members, caregivers, and patients should be surveyed to evaluate treatment effectiveness.
- Administrative data has been used in Canada to examine process and outcome components of quality at a provincial level including service utilization patterns, the association between home palliative care services and end-of-life care, and to make comparisons of health service quality indicators between provinces.
- Currently most provinces and territories are developing palliative care indicators to help monitor service delivery. However, there is currently no coordinated effort to collect common data elements at a palliative care program level.

## Implications

1. Canada has the building blocks in place to develop a robust system for measuring outcomes in palliative and end of life care and should continue working towards making that happen.
2. The Canadian Partnership Against Cancer's initiative to increase standardized screening for distress for cancer patients across Canada has shown significant growth and could be expanded to include the non-cancer palliative patient.
3. Australia's national initiative is an excellent model for Canada to explore. It has common patient-reported outcomes, national benchmark standards and nationally employed staff to support palliative care services to identify priorities for quality improvement, coupled with collection of aggregated data and reporting back to the individual services.

## Recommended Readings

[Howell D, Molloy S, Wilkinson K, Green E, Orchard K, Wang K, et al. Patient-Reported Outcomes in Routine Cancer Clinical Practice: A Scoping Review of Use, Impact on Health Outcomes, and Implementation Factors. Annals of Oncology 2015 Apr 17;1-32.](#)

[Currow D, Allingham S, Yates P, Johnson C, Clark K, Eagar K. Improving national hospice/palliative care service symptom outcomes systematically through point-of-care data collection, structured feedback and benchmarking. Supportive Care in Cancer 2015 Feb;23\(2\):307-15.](#)