



Poster # 22

Title of poster: Conceptualization of a palliative approach to care for culturally diverse populations

Abstract

Background: A palliative approach centres on improving the quality of life of persons with serious life-limiting illnesses and their families. Such an approach to care encompasses multidimensional aspects of health, with an upstream orientation on the needs of ill persons and their families.

Objectives: This presentation addresses the complexities and highlights several key considerations in conducting research about a palliative approach to care for culturally diverse elderly persons with serious illness and their families. We report on lessons learnt during the early phase of our study regarding the challenge of conceptualizing a palliative approach in a way that is congruent with the cultural understandings of life-limiting illness of Chinese-speaking people who live in Canada.

Methods: Multiple research methods, including, literature synthesis, interviews, and focus groups, were employed to explore understandings of a palliative approach to care and quality of life outcomes for Chinese-speaking elderly people with life-limiting illness and their families. The literature synthesis is based on the search database of a comprehensive knowledge synthesis on a palliative approach by the iPANEL team (Initiative for a Palliative Approach in Nursing: Evidence and Leadership – www.ipanel.ca). Screening of this database revealed 14 documents that specifically focused on the care experience of the culturally diverse populations in the context of a palliative approach. An additional 22 articles were identified through subsequent backward and forward citation searches and are currently being screened for relevance. Participants for the interviews include seriously ill Chinese-speaking elderly persons and family support persons in British Columbia. The study is in the early phase of literature screening and interview participant recruitment. To date, 5 participants have been enrolled: 1 ill person and 4 family support persons have completed the interviews. The goal is to recruit a minimum of 5 ill persons and 5 family support persons for the interviews.

Results and discussion: Key issues that have emerged thus far include the conceptual clarification of a palliative approach and the contextualization of language in the culturally diverse populations. The preliminary review of the literature on the cultural dimension of a palliative approach reveals a challenge in defining a palliative approach in the cultural context of the diverse populations. The difficulty in recruiting Chinese-speaking dyads may be reflective of the cultural attitude towards death and dying, and the role of the family in coping with life-limiting illness. In recruiting Chinese-speaking participants for the study, the preference for hope instilling language may further distant participants from providing their views on a palliative

approach to care for the dying. Notably, the culturally appropriate framing of a palliative approach will need to consider the tension between hope of living and acceptance of dying.

Conclusions: This study seeks to contribute to the improvement of quality of care for the frail elderly persons and their families of culturally diverse backgrounds. With an increasing diverse population in Canada, the challenges in research on a palliative approach to care must be addressed in order to achieve the goals of culturally competent care for the frail elderly and their families.

