

## **RESEARCHING AWARENESS OF IMPENDING DEATH IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES**

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**Brief Description of Research or Project:** Questions: Is there awareness of impending death in LTC facilities? What factors in the culture of LTC facilities influence an awareness of impending death? Methods: Interviews, onsite observations, review of charts of 182 decedents who had died in the preceding year Findings: Two levels of awareness of impending death were identified. Generalized awareness reflected a philosophical acknowledgement of human mortality. Clinical awareness was acknowledged when a resident could survive longer than a few days. Transitions in awareness were mediated by resource scarcity and the beliefs that LTC facilities are for living and that no one should die in pain or alone. **Why is this research important to profile at the Research Day 2014?** LTC facilities have become important settings for care at the end of life. Most residents of LTC facilities will die there. The duration of residence between admission and death has declined over recent years, consistent with trends including older age at admission, and greater degrees of frailty and dependence among LTC residents. There is widespread agreement in the field of palliative care that excellence in palliative care requires more than intensive management of late stage symptoms. Pain and symptom management, attendance to the needs of family members, and the balance of disease modifying and palliative approaches to care have been identified as areas in need of improvement for residents of LTC facilities, well before the last few days of life. This report will focus on the issue of late-dawning awareness of impending death within the current culture of LTC and the influences that sustain it.