



Saint Elizabeth
RESEARCH CENTRE
Bringing Knowledge to Life

RESEARCH ON THE RUN

Dying, Death, and Grief

Co-Developing Curriculum on a Palliative Approach to Care

We collaborated with social care workers to develop education that will help them provide palliative care to people who are homeless.

Key Considerations

Homelessness is a life-limiting and chronic health condition but because of societal stigma, people experiencing homelessness are often unable to access health care services, including end-of-life (EOL) services.

There is a sense of mistrust between people who are homeless and health care providers resulting from perceived stigma, negative judgement, and discrimination.

Social care workers are able to build trusting relationships with people who are homeless and therefore there is an opportunity to foster these relationships to directly improve palliative and EOL care.

Project overview

A palliative approach to care provides earlier and ongoing care for people suffering from chronic and life-limiting illnesses. As many people who are homeless face death, and given that the conditions in which they live might be considered chronic and life-limiting, we are teaming up with workers to co-develop learning tools focused on a “palliative approach to care” to support their interactions with people who are homeless.

What did we do?

Social care workers are experts at caring for and developing trusting relationships with homeless people. We wanted to build on this expertise and figure out with them, what they need to learn to better provide a palliative approach, and how do they want to learn it. “Social care workers” refers to social workers, peer support workers, and volunteers working with people who are homeless.

First, we wanted to find out from social care workers what their daily work is like and what already exists to help them learn about a palliative approach. We took four approaches to get this information:

- Conducted a survey of social care workers in 3 cities in Canada (Toronto, Calgary, Victoria)
- With their permission, we actively toured, observed and shadowed workers in their interactions with people who are homeless in their daily setting (this took place in Toronto and Calgary)
- We looked at what research that has already been done in this area had to say
- We attended a Town Hall in Calgary where members of the community gathered to discuss this issue

We held a series of 4 workshops with social care workers in 3 Canadian cities (Toronto, Calgary, Victoria). These workshops invited workers to identify the topics they would find most useful in providing a palliative approach to care, and to identify the best ways of learning for their work conditions.

What did we find?

This project so far has developed the outline and content of an educational curriculum for social care workers working with homeless people on a palliative approach to care. The project also identified the most appropriate method of providing the training, including the most appropriate tools and approaches to learning that will maximize the uptake of knowledge.

Innovative approach

Understanding that social care workers are experts in their daily work experiences and interacting with people who are homelessness, we believed it was imperative that they were the ones who must guide this work. We took a co-development approach to creating the Palliative Approach to Care Curriculum by working directly with social care workers who work with a homeless population every day. Many social care workers who are involved in this project have previous lived experience of what it means to be homeless.

Additionally, we know that Canada is a diverse country and local context can have a large impact on how people do their work. That is why a major focus of this project was to ensure that the developed curriculum is representative of different perspectives from across the country (Toronto, Calgary, Victoria).

IMPACT: How are we moving Knowledge to Action

The project is following the Knowledge-as-Action (KAA) Framework using six different dimensions to ensure we are moving knowledge to action. Using the KAA framework and co-developing techniques, this project addressed the need for training on palliative care and palliative approach to care. We are working with three organizations who have agreed to pilot the delivery of this educational curriculum to social care workers across Canada.

Who are our collaborators?

We are working with collaborators from 3 Canadian cities who are key stakeholders in palliative care for structurally vulnerable people. These stakeholders are providing input to this project as part of a steering committee:

- Dr. Naheed Dosani (Toronto)
- Dr. Simon Colgan (Calgary)
- Dr. Danica Gleave (Victoria)
- Dr. Sonya Jackubec (Calgary)
- Kristen Kvakic (Victoria)
- Ashely Mollison (Victoria)
- Dr. Kelli Stadjuhar (Victoria)

About our researchers

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About the Saint Elizabeth Research Centre

Saint Elizabeth has made a strategic commitment to research – \$13 million over 13 years. The Saint Elizabeth (SE) Research Centre conducts impact-oriented health services research and evaluation to synthesize, generate, translate, adapt and directly apply scientific evidence in the design, delivery and evaluation of person- and family-centred health and social care services.

At the Saint Elizabeth (SE) Research Centre, we study the needs of people, their caregivers, and healthcare providers, to develop innovative solutions to tough health and social care problems.

The SE Research Centre has four fields of research and evaluation: Aging in Society; Dying, Death and Grief; Health and Care Experiences; and Models of Care Delivery.

We see possibilities everywhere.