Palliative Care in Oncology

Emphasis on Communication

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Disclosures

I have no relevant disclosures with respect to the topics to be discussed.

Wouldn’t it be nice if I did?!
Outline

• A brief introduction to Palliative Care

• A “how to”/ “nuts and bolts” on communication

• Provide some evidence-based “pearls”

• Demonstrate via fun role play…emphasis on “fun”….I will sit in “hot seat” and you give me the clinical scenario.

“Oncodoxes”: The catch 22’s of oncology  
(Mintzer, JCO. 2013; 31:393-394)

• Be optimistic/ be honest
• Be aggressive / Be careful
• Prolong survival/Refer to hospice sooner

“It is easy for the those working in hospice and palliative medicine to criticize the oncologist for continuing with chemotherapy. They are not the ones who have to make the call.”

Palliative Care: What it is not

- End of life care only
- Hospice
- Abdication of the patient

Palliative Care: What it is

- Symptom management
- Unbound by point in the trajectory, eg, from time of diagnosis to bereavement
- Communication: goals of care
- “And/with” and NOT “either/or”

What is Palliative Care?

- Specialized medical care for people with serious illness
- Relief from symptoms, pain and stress – whatever the diagnosis
- Improve quality of life for both patient and family
- A team that provides an extra layer of support
- Appropriate at any age and at any stage of illness – Can be provided together with curative treatment
Palliative Care Models

Old

Life Prolonging Care
Medicare Hospice Benefit

New

Life Prolonging Care
Palliative Care
Hospice Care


- The Domains of Care in the Palliative care model are congruent with the American Society of Clinical Oncology Statement: physical, psychological, social and spiritual consequences of cancer.
- “There is a need to change the paradigm for advanced cancer care to include an earlier and more thorough assessment of patients’ options, goals, and preferences, and to tailor the care that we deliver to those individual needs throughout the continuum of care.”

“Either/Or” limits us

- What if we did not worry about “when end of life begins”?
- What if we did not target certain patients only?
- What if palliative care or supportive care were part of the culture and not an outside consultant?
- What if there were no “triggers” or strict criteria, and we went from “best practices” to “always practices” in hematologic malignancies? (Kamal *JCO*, 2013: 3047).
Is a marriage possible between Oncology and PC?

“By all means marry:
If you get a good wife, you will become happy.
If you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher.”

Socrates (c. 470-399 BC)

Landmark Study

- 151 patients
- Newly dx met NSCLC
- Randomized
  - Standard oncologic care (SOC)
  - SOC + early palliative care
- Primary outcome: QOL

Palliative Care Improves Survival

Integration and Impact of Palliative Care on an Oncology Inpatient Ward: The Duke 9300 Experience

Richard F. Riedel, MD
Kim M. Slusser, MSN, RN, CHPN
Anthony N. Galanos, MD

Summary

- Our novel, co-rounding model:
  - Results in statistically significant decreases in LOS, 7-day and 30-day readmission rates.
  - ICU transfers are decreased (-15%).
  - Hospice referral have increased (+17%).

Through the integration of oncology and palliative care, we have seen improvements in patient outcomes, housestaff education/satisfaction, and multidisciplinary communication and collaboration.


- Retrospective cohort study at Duke. Pre and post intervention patients admitted to the solid tumor inpatient service
- Cancer dx and stage; LOS; ICU transfer rate; discharge dispo; time to readmit: 7 and 30d. Nursing and MD satisfaction surveys.
- Lower LOS and 7 day readmission rates
- Increasing hospice referrals and 15% decrease in ICU transfers.
- Physicians and nurses universally favored the model.
27(8): 511-515.

- Provision of pharmaceuticals
- Optimizing medication regimens
- Education and drug information
- Patient safety
- Administration/formulary management

- Number 34: participate in family meetings…
Duke Palliative Care Consult Service
Functional Pager 970-2273

- Gen Med patients only...until July 2007
- 169 patients seen in the 1st year...1200 this past yr
- *Almost one quarter with diagnosis of cancer...* 1/3 of consults are ICU consults

Reasons for Palliative Care Consultation

![Diagram](Communication, Symptom, Dispo, EOL)

Symptoms

- “Symptoms, then, are in reality nothing but the cry from suffering organs”

Jean Martin Charcot, MD
Patient Symptoms at the End of Life
Poppe-Ries et al.  DUMC

• Five units in a tertiary care, teaching hospital: two ICU’s and three regular floor units (med and surg)

• Both family and providers were asked to list the two most distressing symptoms for the pt in the last three days of life.

• “Please tell me the two symptoms or problems that bothered the pt most in the last three days before death. Some examples are pain, shortness of breath, tiredness, nausea, confusion, depression.”

Patient Symptoms at end of life: Results

• 197 deaths and 485 surveys from nurses, attendings, residents, interns and families

• Top three were “shortness of breath”, “pain” and “do not know”

• 23% of responses were “diagnoses”

Conclusions: Poppe-Ries et al.

• Nearly 1/3 of all respondents did not list an actual symptom

• Health Care providers frequently listed a diagnosis

• The most frequently cited symptom by families was “do not know” (may have been influenced by ICU)

• For any given patient, there was little agreement on what symptoms were distressing (agreement among respondents for any given symptom was assessed through reliability coefficients).
Manage the Symptoms First

“No man can be rendered pain free whilst he still wrestles with his faith. No man can come to terms with his God when every waking moment is taken up with pain or vomiting.”


It Is Not Just Symptom Management...

“…what may be most difficult is moving through the transition from gravely ill and fighting death to terminally ill and seeking peace…

shifting the goals of treatment from cure or longer survival to preservation of comfort and dignity.”

Communication

“Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.”

Rudyard Kipling 1865-1936

What patients (families) want

- They want to talk, and be heard

  - Study Design: cross-sectional; 51 recorded conferences
    - 4 Seattle ICUs, end-of-life decision-making; f/u survey
    - 214 family members, 51 families; 36 MDs
  - Results:
    - Increased family speech was associated with greater satisfaction and with decreased perception of conflict
    - Family spoke 29%, MDs 71%; avg time 32 mins

What patients (families) want

• They want honesty and transparency

  – Study design: cohort of 179 surrogates for critically ill patients in 4 ICUs at UCSF
    • semi-structured interview on day 5 of mechanical ventilation
  – Results: 93% felt that avoiding discussions about prognosis is an unacceptable way to maintain hope
    • Common sentiments:
      – physicians have obligation to discuss prognosis
      – moral aversion to false hope
      – prognostication helps family prepare for possibility of death


• They want compassion and empathy

  – Study design: RCT of videotaped intervention, with pre and post-test anxiety inventory and rating of MD
    • 123 breast cancer survivors and 87 healthy volunteers,
    • video of oncologist consultation …scripted but varied on degree of compassion demonstrated
  – Results: viewing the “enhanced compassion” video was associated with significantly decreased anxiety
    • Also a/w higher rating of physician on non-emotional topics


Here’s the “intervention”

• It’s only 40 seconds long!

  • Segment 1: “I know this is a tough experience to go through and I want you to know that I am here with you. Some of the things that I say to you today may be difficult to understand, so I want you to feel comfortable in stopping me if something I say is confusing or doesn’t make sense. We are here together, and we will go through this together.”

  • Segment 2: I know this is a tough time for you and I want to emphasize again that we are in this together. I will be with you each step along the way.

What we do...we tend to...

- miss or ignore opportunities for empathy

  - Study design: audio-recorded clinic visits
    - 290 pts with advanced cancer, 51 oncologists
    - coded for the presence of empathic opportunities

  - Results: 37% of conversations contained at least one empathic opportunity
    - oncologists responded empathically only 22% of time
      - responses more prevalent among younger oncologists and those self-rated as "more socioemotional than technical"

Process of Empathic Communication


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- Single center, qualitative phenomenology study
- 68 transcripts of audio-recorded conferences
- NURSE pneumonic (naming, understanding, respecting, supporting, exploring)
- Coded as "unburied" or "buried"
- Statement followed by a pause = unburied
- Empathic statement encased in medical talk=buried

- Buried statements most commonly followed by medical talk
- Unburied statements were associated with alliance from the family 71% of time compared with 12% when buried
- “alliance” responses deepened the discussion, expressed agreement or mourning
- MDs missed an opportunity to address emotion 26% of time. MDs attended to all family emotions in only 7% of conferences


- Another member of the health care team, e.g. social work or nursing, were present in all 68 conferences yet spoke only an avg of 5% of the time. In the “Discussion” section: “these results suggest that maximizing the expertise of the full health care team may offer an additional layer of support...”

- If the empathic statement was buried, it often stopped the progression of the conversation and led to an alliance response only 12% of the time. By contrast, if it were “unburied” and the MD paused to allow the family time to respond, the family continued to emote and an alliance response was 18 fold higher than in the “buried” condition.

Most people do not listen
With the intent to understand;
They listen with the intent to reply

Steven Covey
What if we do not listen?

What works

• Several “effective themes” at the end of life

  – Study design: analysis of 51 audio-recorded family discussions in ICU setting

  – Results: Increasing frequency of 3 types of clinician statements was associated with increased family satisfaction:
    • Assurance that the patient will not be abandoned
    • The patient will be comfortable and will not suffer
    • Expressions of support of family decisions, whatever they may be

What Works

• “What do you understand about where your Brother is right now in his illness?” (Ann Intern Med 1999;130:744-745)

• “Hope for the best and prepare for the worst” (Ann Intern Med 2003;138:439-443)

• Listen... be curious... tell yourself a good story about this patient and family... maybe it’s not guilt but “control” over a bad situation (Science, October 2008, pgs 115-117)

• Studies confirm that when families speak more than the doctor, they have more productive meetings and much greater satisfaction (N Engl J Med 2007;356:513-515. and Crit Care Med. 2004;32:1484-1488.)

Recommended Steps for Discussions with Families : What Works

• Appropriate setting... privacy, quiet, attend

• Ask pt/family what they understand

• Ask what do they expect will happen

• Ask what would be the goals of the pt. Keep it focused on the patient, eg, “if the patient were in the room with us now...”

• Give info in small pieces and stop frequently: Ask, tell, ask

Summary

• Patient-Centered style – “empathetic, open”
  – Allows patient to express feelings
  – Maintains eye contact
  – Sits closer to patient
  – Asks patient about thoughts, feelings
  – Verifies understanding

  QUESTION: Are women inherently better at this?
Gender Differences

Communication is...

• ...teachable and learnable

• Good communication makes an enormous difference in patient care in terms of cost, satisfaction, discovering and meeting goals of care ...and how we are perceived

• Listening and even silence can help patients and families more than information for the sake of talking
Hospital Based Palliative Care

“Palliative care is not a way out but a way through…

Hospitals are a place of miracles and cures, but when that can not be the outcome, we

‘…palliate often and comfort always.’”


A good book for clinicians

Mastering Communication with Seriously Ill Patients

The National Bestseller Second Edition with Answers to Ten Questions People Ask

Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In

Roger Fisher and William Ury