

The Role of the Palliative Care Social Worker

Presented by:
Joanne Schleicher, LCSW, ACHP-SW
Palliative Care Social Worker
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Today's presentation is designed to be an interactive discussion of.....

- The role & challenges of the PCSW in the inpatient and outpatient setting;
- The criteria for referral to PCSW;
- How to present the role to patients, families and other HC providers;
- The PCSW assessment and interventions;
- The therapeutic benefits of debriefing and bereavement f/u;
- The importance of personal self-care.

The roles of social workers in the Inpatient setting...

Social Work & Care Management

- Coordination of patient care from admission to discharge
- Discharge Planning
- LOS management
- Connecting patient to services & resources
- Identifying patient insurance coverage
- Identifying patient risk factors & obstacles to care and discharge
- Works with medically & socially complex patients & families
- Crisis intervention
- Intervention for child and/or adult abuse/neglect, domestic violence, sexual assault, guardianship, adoption

Palliative Care Social Worker

- Focus on psychosocial impact of serious illness on patients & families
- Address patient/family distress r/t advanced illness and End-of-Life
- Participate in family meetings with care teams
- Provide continuity of support during transitions through hospital divisions
- Build relationships: following patients & families in OP clinic and upon readmission to hospital.
- Facilitating discussions about Advance Directives
- Facilitate bereavement debriefing for staff following death of complex patient
- Bereavement follow-up after death of patient

The challenges...

~The Care Management social worker maintains the central role in the care of the patient. The challenge of the PCSW is to establish an effective working relationship with the Care Management team on each unit.

~Visibility is key.

~Boundary and role issues are a common challenge; the goal is to develop a role that is COLLABORATIVE and not duplicative.

~Functioning in dual role also presents challenge d/t time constraints.

~Limited SW peer support d/t specialized nature of the role.

What is your experience???

The Outpatient PCSW

Roles

- Psychosocial assessment & support
- Caregiver assessment & support
- Counseling
- Advance Directives/Advance Care Planning
- Referrals to resources for basic needs & continuity of care
- Education using written materials
- Collaboration with the PC team

Challenges

- Limited use of the Outpatient Clinic
- Clarifying role of OP PCSW
- Caseload of the home care SW
- Demonstrating financial value
- Balancing inpatient and outpatient assignments

What is your experience??

Other duties as assigned.....

- Quality Improvement
- Program Evaluation
- Education for other disciplines on the Social Work role
- Research activities

Other duties?

“What exactly do you do??”

Introducing the Role of PCSW

- “Counselor” vs “Social Worker” title
- Sooner rather than later, even if they’re ‘doing fine’ – relationship building
- Normalize the role – routine visit.
- Consistent presence
- F/u visit on M.D. or N.P. day off
- Joint visits with M.D. or N.P.
- Attend Family Meetings
- Attend Interdisciplinary rounds

Other helpful approaches?

Criteria for Referral to PCSW

Patient or Family....

- Emotional distress r/t new diagnosis and/or treatment
- Comorbid psychiatric, mental health, or psychosocial conditions; ETOH/drug abuse; poor coping mechanisms
- Complicated psychosocial situations
- Caregiver support
- Concerns about course of disease and decision-making
- Discord or disagreement about treatment decisions
- LOS or multiple hospitalizations
- Support for minor children
- Withdrawal of life-sustaining treatments
- Risk of complicated grief or bereavement issues
- Need for Advance Directive and/or Advance Care Planning discussions

Other criteria?

The PCSW Assessment

- Reason for Consult
- Assessment/Presenting Problems (may include)
 - Social support & resources
 - Psychosocial Distress
 - Emotional distress
 - Coping Mechanisms
 - Spiritual Distress
 - Values & Preferences About Information & Communication
 - Decision-Making Style of Patient/Family
 - Anticipatory Bereavement Issues
 - Educational & Informational Needs
 - Cultural Factors Affecting Care
 - Co-morbid Psychiatric & Psychosocial Conditions

The PCSW Assessment, continued...

- Goals of Patient/Family
 - Review & Revise Life Priorities
 - Resolve Unfinished Business
 - Putting Financial/Personal Affairs in Order
 - Acceptable Sense of Control
 - Optimized Quality of Life
 - Personal Growth & Enhanced Meaning
- Recommendations/Plan for Continued Follow-up
- Advance Directive
 - Identified MPOA/Decision-Makers

Advance Care Planning Questions

1. Advance Care Planning Documents
 1. DPOA
 2. LW/HC Directive
 3. MOLST/POLST/TPOPP/MOST
 4. OHDNR
2. Serious Illness Care
 1. Prognostic Understanding
 2. How Much Information Would You Like to Have?
 3. Prognostic Communication
 4. Most Important Health Situation Goals
 5. Greatest Fears/Worries
 6. Unacceptable Function
 7. If Condition Worsens
 8. Family Discussion of Priorities & Wishes

Tools of the Trade

- The Patient Health Questionnaire- PHQ-2 & PHQ-9
- NCCN Distress Thermometer for Patients
- The Patient Dignity Inventory
- Mini-Mental Status Examination (MMSE)
- SLUMS Examination
- Family Caregiver Assessment Tools
- Parenting – Let’s talk about the kids!
- Advance Directive options

Other useful Tools??

Anticipatory Grief Issues to consider...

- ❖ Family/caregiver limitations
- ❖ Limited social support
- ❖ Limited financial support or resources
- ❖ Limited access to care
- ❖ Family discord
- ❖ Intensely dependent relationships
- ❖ Concern regarding care of dependents
- ❖ Spiritual or existential distress
- ❖ Unresolved or multiple prior losses
- ❖ Risk of complicated grief

Bereavement: Acknowledgement of Grief & Loss

- Personal visit or call from Palliative Care Team member
- Condolence card
- Identify family members at risk for complicated grief
- Refer to Community Bereavement Resources for adults and children

Other interventions?

Components of a Debriefing Session

Ideally, session should be held within a week of the patient's death, offered in a safe and trusting environment....

- Welcome & Introductions
- Factual Information/Details of the Case
- Review of the Patient's Care
- Personal responses to the Case
- Review Strategies for Coping & Self-Care
- Lessons learned
- Conclusion

Compassion Fatigue

How do we identify it, and what do we do about it???

The Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project is dedicated to educating caregivers about authentic, sustainable self-care and aiding organizations in their goal of providing healthy, compassionate care to those whom they serve.

<http://www.compassionfatigue.org/>

Joanne Schleicher, LCSW, ACHP-SW
Social Worker
Mercy Clinic Palliative Care
621 S. New Ballas ; Suite 6017B
St. Louis, MO 63141
Phone: 314-251-7840
joanne.schleicher@mercy.net
