

BULLETIN

Award-winning research explores stress management for LTC staff

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By Anne Leclerc

HSA member

When a resident dies in long-term care (LTC), this can take a toll on staff who have developed close emotional bonds with them. Our knowledge-to-action (KTA) research project “Keeping the Light Shining” identified challenges that staff experience when caring for LTC residents throughout the dying process and strategies to help alleviate staff stress and burnout. This Phase 2 of our research was supported with funds from the WorkSafeBC research program.



For this project, we have been awarded the Health Employers of BC (HEABC) 2019 Workplace Health Innovation Gold Apple Award. This award is for a project or best practice that makes use of leading practices to improve workplace and worker health and safety. Winning projects have demonstrated leadership, vision, measurable results in improving the health and safety of health care employees, project management, and system-wide thinking.

By conducting our project, we enhanced our understanding of the interdisciplinary team’s challenges in LTC, and also improved the quality of workplace practice and environment with regards to end-of-life (EOL) care and palliative services for the dying residents and their families. This is important to consider because the well-being of staff is interconnected to the well-being of residents, their families and whomever they serve.

Our findings highlight the importance of instituting policies and programs that promote the psychological well-

being of LTC staff.

Recommendations include:

- emphasizing the importance of acknowledging grief and stress
- supporting staff in taking time to say goodbye to dying residents
- supporting debriefings and attendance at mini-memorials
- promoting self-care and mindfulness activities
- leading and nurturing effective communication with the team and residents' families in ensuring care goals are understood and shared
- ensuring that residents and families benefit from supports such as palliative and spiritual care
- providing continuing education for staff regarding EOL care and coaching skills on comforting residents and family members during difficult times
- reassessing staffing levels to account for the changed demographics and care needs of current residents and providing resources to support staff in comforting residents and families
- fostering supportive leadership practices and promoting a culture of safety

Specific recommendations for higher learning institutions and professional associations:

- enhancing the emotional preparation of learners for coping with resident deaths (education on death, dying, grief, burnout, moral distress, and building resilience built into the curriculum)
- enhancing education on palliative care approach and dementia as a terminal illness, built into curriculum
- promoting LTC as a specialist area of healthcare

Our team hopes to continue with our work to sustain our research and further aide in preventing workplace stress and burnout related to resident deaths in LTC homes.

For more information on the HEABC awards, please consult this link:

<http://www.bchealthcareawards.ca/page3140.aspx>

For more information about our research, please consult our webpage:

<http://professionalpractice.providencehealthcare.org/ltc-team-support>

Disclaimer: This news article is intended to present the views, findings and opinions of the research team only, as reported by the research team. It does not represent the views of the research funding agency. Any inquiries about this article or this research project should be directed to the research team responsible for this research project.

Congratulations to all HSA members whose team projects received an HEABC BC Health Care Award!

Dianna Mah-Jones Award of Excellent in Person-Centred Care, Award of Merit

Mary-Anne Bedford, Physiotherapist, 100 Mile District Hospital

For the project Mobility: Back to Basics

Workplace Health Innovation Gold Apple Award

Kit Chan, Dietitian, St. Vincent's Hospital (Langara)

Anne Leclerc, Physiotherapist, St. Paul's Hospital

Karen Pott, Occupational Therapist, St. Vincent's Hospital (Langara)

For the project Keeping the Light Shining

Collaborative Solutions Gold Apple Award

Mary Morrison, Women's Counsellor, Victoria Women's Transition House

For the project The Harbour Community Health and Wellness Centre

Collaborative Solutions Award of Merit

Carolyn Jarvis, Social Worker, Vancouver General Hospital

For the project Transplant First Initiative

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