Palliative Rehabilitation: A collaborative Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy practice audit


Introduction
Palliative Rehabilitation can be defined as a holistic and multidisciplinary approach which aims to optimise quality of life irrespective of prognosis and maximise or maintain performance and participation. It enables the patient and their caregivers to adapt to their changing status and is always centred on the patient’s goals. It is not traditionally associated with palliative care and thus not widely researched or always delivered in a formalised manner.

The Specialist Palliative Care (SPC) service in Our Lady’s Hospice and Care Services (OLH&CS) offer palliative rehabilitation. The aim of the audit was to evaluate the effectiveness of a formalised palliative rehabilitation programme in the day hospice, outpatient and inpatient services of OLH&CS. The audit was completed over a 7month period in 2014/2015, using the process below, which was developed by the occupational therapy (OT) and physiotherapy (PT) teams.

Rehabilitative Process

Participants

Referral Source
Inpatient Unit: 29%
Outpatient Clinic: 62%
Day Hospice: 9%

Participants
21 participants
Male: 13
Female: 8

Diagnosis
Malignant: 23%
Non-malignant: 77%

Age Profile
50 years or less: 4%
51-65 years: 39%
66 years or more: 57%

Results

Canadian Occupational Performance Measure

Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy-Palliative Care

Edmonton Functional Assessment Tool

Short Physical Performance Battery

Findings summary
The quality of life measure was changed in October 2014 from the Assessment of Quality of Life (Axelsson et al, 1990) to the FACIT PAL 14 (Cella, 2014), post a review by Chiu et al (2014) comparing three shortened questionnaire for the assessment of quality of life in advanced cancer. Post reflection, the Barthel Index measure was replaced with the SPPB (Guralnik et al, 1994) which more specifically tests balance, gait, lower limb muscle function and a global measure of strength. This audit demonstrated maintenance and improvement in function, goal achievement and improved quality of life among participants. Interestingly the COPM results, the occupation specific outcome measure, demonstrated the most significant positive outcomes. From an occupational therapy perspective, these findings highlight the importance of an occupation focused approach to rehabilitation in palliative care settings. Physiotherapy outcomes demonstrate the potential to improve physical functioning in the face of progressive life limiting conditions.

Limitations

- Staffing changes
- Nature of population
- Limited literature
- Time restraints for completion of all measures
- Inappropriate referrals
- Small sample size
- Lack of both OT/PT goals

Implications for practice
This study highlights the potential of rehabilitation in improving and maintaining function with a palliative population, throughout the disease trajectory. Its also emphasises, the value of formalizing a rehabilitation process, with selected outcome measures for both OT and PT. There is a need for OT and PT to further develop their roles and evidence base in this area, increasing the profile of palliative rehabilitation.

References


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