

Working in Multidisciplinary Care Teams: Perspectives from Health Care and Social Service Providers

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Abstract : Holistic and patient-centred palliative care and support require an integrated system of care that includes health and social service providers working together to ensure that patients and families have access to the care they need. The objective of this study is to further explore and understand the benefits and challenges of mobilizing multidisciplinary care teams for health care professionals and social service providers. Drawing on an interpretivist, exploratory, qualitative design, our multidisciplinary research team (medicine, nursing and social work) conducted interviews with 15 health care and social service providers in the Ottawa region. Interview data was audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a reflexive thematic analysis approach. The data deepens our understandings of the facilitators and barriers posed by multidisciplinary care teams. Three main findings emerged: First, the data highlighted the benefits of multidisciplinary care teams for both patient outcomes and quality of life and provider mental health; second, the data showed that the lack of a system-wide integrated communication system reduces the quality of patient care and increases provider stress while working in multidisciplinary care teams; finally, the data demonstrated the existence of implicit hierarchies between disciplines, this coupled with different disciplinary perspectives of palliative care provision can lead to friction and challenges within care teams. These findings will have important implications for the future of palliative care as they will help to facilitate and build stronger person-centred/relationship-centred palliative care practices by naming the challenges faced by multidisciplinary palliative care teams and providing examples of best practices.

Keywords : public health palliative care, palliative care nursing, care networks, integrated health care, palliative care approach, public health, multidisciplinary work, care teams

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