Developing an Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Programme in Palliative and End of Life Care

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Background

- Interdisciplinary learning is recognised as playing a pivotal role in preparing care professionals in today’s complex health care environment
- Efforts to develop and implement interdisciplinary palliative care education programmes have been scarce and fragmented
- The World Health Assembly (2014) has adopted a resolution urging its members to implement palliative care education

Aims

- Design and implement an innovative interdisciplinary curriculum for postgraduate education in palliative care that is person-centred, efficient, accepted, and sustainable

Methods

Stage 1

- Project steering group
  - Initial draft of the curriculum
  - Three stakeholder events
  - Systematic review of palliative care guidelines and professional standards and core competencies
  - Provided feedback on draft course content and learning outcomes
  - Revised draft of the proposed curriculum

Stage 2

- Service-user focus group (n=8)
  - Living with a life-limiting illness
  - Using palliative care services
  - Provided feedback on proposed learning outcomes, structure, content and delivery
  - Revised draft of the proposed curriculum
  - Reviewed by two external experts
  - Development of an interdisciplinary curriculum

Results

- Curricular components were redesigned based on feedback from all stakeholders
- Openness towards interdisciplinary feedback and external engagement, coupled with flexibility and compromise, enabled the development of a person-centred, efficient, accepted and sustainable programme

The interdisciplinary curriculum content diagram

Key messages

- Need for interdisciplinary education programmes in palliative and end of life care
- Need for a framework that promotes partnership working between academic and clinical settings
- Lack of evaluation tools that provide future direction in interdisciplinary learning
- Need to improve educators’ expertise in interdisciplinary teaching

Conclusion

- Developing an interdisciplinary palliative care education programme can encounter multiple barriers
- Openness and acceptance of feedback on multiple levels while focusing on learners’ needs, to enhance care, can create a successful and feasible programme

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