Six Steps to Success: The North West End of Life Care Programme for Care Homes

Evaluation

Mary O’Brien¹, Jennifer Kirton¹, Katherine Knighting¹, Rob Gandy¹, Brenda Roe³, Barbara Jack¹, Caroline Flynn², Elaine Horgan³.
¹ Evidence-based Practice Research Centre, Edge Hill University, UK; ² Cheshire & Merseyside Strategic Clinical Network, UK; ³ NHS England

BACKGROUND
There are over 400,000 older people living in independent sector care homes in the UK and more than 70,000 people die each year in UK nursing and residential homes. With an increasing aging population it is expected that the number of people who move into residential care, as they age, will continue to rise. For many people these care settings become their home and therefore support to enable them to be cared for, and to die there if they so wish, should be promoted. The Department of Health End of Life Care Strategy identified high incidences of unnecessary admissions to hospital from care homes at the end of life and highlighted a need for training for care home staff.

As a result, the Six Steps to Success programme was developed in the north-west of England to underpin the organisational change required and support staff development to enhance end of life care within care homes.

The aim of the programme is to ensure all residents receive high quality end of life care provided by a care home that encompasses the philosophy of palliative care and enables people to die where they choose.

Aim:
The aim of this study was to explore the impact of the Six Steps to Success programme on end of life care (EoLC) in care homes in Northwest England.

Methodology:
This was a mixed-method evaluation consisting of three phases:

1. Examination of audit data (quality markers and measures; post death information; Knowledge, Skills & Confidence (KSC) audit)
2. Questionnaires & interviews with Six Steps Facilitators
3. Case studies of 6 care homes

Analysis involved descriptive statistical comparisons and frequencies; qualitative data were subject to content analysis to identify themes.

RESULTS:
1. 100% of care homes showed improvement for ‘Advance Care Planning’ and ‘Communication’
2. A majority of staff showed improvements in their Knowledge Skills and Confidence
3. Residents dying in their preferred place of death increased
4. Residents dying with an Advance Care Plan (ACP) in place increased
5. EoLC documentation in care homes improved

CONCLUSION:
End of life care in care homes has clearly improved following participation in the programme. Greater use of EoLC tools, such as Advance Care Planning, was apparent. Knowledge skills and confidence around EoLC improved markedly amongst care home staff ensuring residents’ wishes and preferences at end of life were met. More confident and better trained care home staff are now empowered to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and to ensure that more residents are able to die in their preferred place.

Undoubtedly the Six Steps to Success programme has helped care home staff to deliver better end of life care for their residents.

Contact for further information regarding the evaluation: obrienn@edgehill.ac.uk

*PPC=Preferred priorities for care
*EoLC=End of Life care