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“Patch them up and send them home”: perceptions of nurses and physiotherapists in their role with end-stage COPD

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Palliative Care Congress abstracts

**The 11th Palliative Care Congress
9th – 11th March 2016
The Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC)
Glasgow, Scotland, UK**

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Poster No. 22**Nursing Home Staff's Experience of Moral Distress when Caring for Residents at the End of Life**

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Background: Eighteen percent of the older population die in nursing homes in the United Kingdom. Moral distress in healthcare professionals has been linked to end of life issues but there has been a lack of investigation of the concept in the nursing home context and whether staff in this environment experience it.

Aim: The aim of the study was to understand how nursing home staff experienced moral distress when they cared for residents coming to the end of life.

Method: The study used an interpretive descriptive design, which utilised the critical incident technique to collect data from 16 participants from nursing homes using semi-structured interviews. The interviews focused on positive and challenging incidents the staff experienced when caring for residents at the end of life. Data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

Results: The staff were found to hold values about 'good dying' which influenced their practice of advocating, caring, communicating and relating with residents, relatives, GPs, and colleagues, when a resident was on the journey through the complex living and dying trajectory. Incongruent values with others contributed to the staff not being able to 'do the right thing' leading to 'powerlessness' which was found to be the characteristic of their moral distress. Participants were found to experience moral distress because the incongruent values could lead to care decisions which staff felt contributed to 'bad dying' or a 'bad death'.

Conclusion: Nursing home residents are vulnerable and the staff need support to provide good quality end of life care. Understanding the experience of moral distress by staff working in this environment will inform and improve the appropriateness of the support provided for staff.

Poster No. 23**"Patch them up and send them home": perceptions of nurses and physiotherapists in their role with end-stage COPD**

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Background: People with severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) have a high symptom burden and experience repeated hospital admissions as their disease progresses. End of life is typically difficult to predict, and although palliative care initiatives are developing, active treatment often continues up to death. There is a lack of literature in the field concerning the impact this has on staff delivering care, and their role in decision-making within this patient group.

Aim: To explore the role of staff in caring and treatment decision-making for those with acute severe COPD and the multi-disciplinary team relationships influencing care.

Methods: This exploratory, qualitative study consisted of 4 interviews and 1 focus group with nurses and physiotherapists (n=10) who care for patients with severe COPD in the acute hospital setting. A grounded theory approach to analysis was aided by the software NVivo.

Results: Advocacy and support to patients and families were cited as important aspects of their role, but effectiveness is hampered by pressure on beds and the general approach of "patch them up and send them home". Advocacy was described in terms of information-giving and communication, and staff opinions were consulted in some treatment decisions, but this depended on the hierarchy of the medical team: "...it comes down to which consultant is in charge that day". Levels of decision-making involvement and advocacy were related to knowing the patient and professional experience, but were significantly limited by time and other pressures.

Conclusions: Participants described frustration regarding the lack of palliative care decision-making in end-stage COPD, but nurses and physiotherapists are developing their roles in advocacy for this patient group. A second phase of data collection is investigating the nature of advocacy in this group further.

Poster No. 24**What are hospice patients' views on corneal donation, the donation of their corneas, and the timing of its discussion?**

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Background: Corneal donation can lead to restoration of sight. Age, comorbidities and cancer do not preclude patients from donating their corneas. Healthcare professionals feel that giving patients the choice to donate their