



Article Review:

Improving End-of Life Outcomes in Nursing Homes by Targeting Residents at High Risk of Mortality for Palliative Care: Program Description and Evaluation

Cari Levy, M.D., Monica Morris, B.S., and Andrew Kramer, M.D.

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Key Points

- ✓ Research indicates that end-of-life care in nursing homes is often inadequate.
- ✓ Implementation of a structured program, the Making Advance Planning a Priority (MAPP) identified nursing home patients with a high risk of mortality and sought to address their end-of life needs improved end-of-life outcomes.
- ✓ The MAPP program was designed to:
 - Identify high risk patients using a mortality prediction tool.
 - Inform the attending physician of mortality risk
 - Obtain a consult for either palliative or hospice care
 - Complete a comprehensive advance directive.
- ✓ The patient mortality prediction scores were derived from the Minimum Data Set (MDS) which contain clinical assessments that are required of Medicaid and Medicare certified nursing homes.
- ✓ The MDS information is updated at regular intervals and considers the following area/criteria:
 - Weight loss (\geq 5lbs within 30 days, 10 lbs within 180 days)
 - Male gender
 - Functional ability
 - Swallowing difficulties
 - Shortness of breath
 - Age >88
 - $BMI \leq 22 \text{kg/m}^2$
 - CHF
- ✓ A score of 7 or greater was established as the threshold for designating a resident at high risk of mortality. This score triggered notification of mortality risk to the resident's attending physician.

**For More Information Contact Your Community
Hospice Compassus Team**

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- ✓ Patients deemed to have 50% risk of expiring within the year (a score of 7 or greater) were considered high risk and admitted into the study.
- ✓ Program implementation resulted in the following benefits to the residents:
 - 100% of the patients having an advance directive
 - 39.3% reduction in terminal hospitalizations
 - 23.7 % increase in palliative or Hospice care referrals
- ✓ Other research has indicated that:
 - Utilizing Hospice programs by the nursing home residents improves adequate daily pain management, improves the overall experience for the family and improves the resident's care during the last week of life.
 - Advance directives may offer hope to nursing home residents that their wishes will be known and respected, but these discussions are not common.
 - Even though the use of Hospice services offers many benefits to the residents and their families, Hospice services are widely underutilized by this population.
 - Terminal hospitalizations result in discontinuity of care, poor pain management, poor symptom control and are costly. The alternative palliative care or Hospice approach addresses these issues and allows the patient to be cared for at a more appropriate lower level of care.
 - By allowing the residents of the nursing homes the opportunity to be cared for by Hospice, the residents experience the benefits of having a more comfortable death in a more supportive environment with more family involvement.

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