
Outpatient Palliative Care

A case study illustrating clinic support offered to patients receiving cancer treatment

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BACKGROUND: Palliative care programs in the United States are becoming more integrated with oncology outpatient practices.

OBJECTIVES: This article offers a condensed review of available literature on the usefulness of palliative care in the oncology clinic setting and a case study to illustrate these ideas.

METHODS: Literature was reviewed related to the successes and failures of providing an embedded palliative care team in an oncology clinic and its role and effectiveness as part of a collaborative interprofessional team for patients with cancer.

FINDINGS: The incorporation of palliative care into outpatient oncology clinics presented a reduction in symptom burden, financial burden, and emergency department visits for symptom management. Palliative care also facilitates increased communication between patients and providers to ensure that care meets patients' wishes.

KEYWORDS

palliative care; head and neck cancer; outpatient; case study

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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PALLIATIVE CARE IS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH HOSPICE CARE because of similar values; however, there are distinct differences. Like hospice care, palliative care may be used at or near the end of life among patients with acute or chronic disease (Morrison & Meier, 2004). However, palliative care can also be employed in the early stages of any disease to provide emotional and spiritual support, as well as symptom management. In addition, palliative care has begun to make inroads into other areas of care, including many specialties, and has even become a specialty itself. Palliative care is useful for symptom management support and alleviation of suffering among patients with any disease or condition.

Palliative care practitioners are an important part of the interprofessional team. They work to expand the scope of care and provide improved quality of life for many patients with cancer, as well as for patients with other chronic diseases. Palliative care in the outpatient setting is an underused resource for many treatment scenarios involving patients with cancer (Ferrell et al., 2017). Like other specialties, palliative care is shifting toward a presence more in the outpatient clinic and community settings. This shift is a result of reduced access to palliative services specifically and health care in general; increased cultural awareness and modifications to communication strategies are needed to meet the challenges inherent in outpatient settings (Lyckholm & Slycord, 2017). This article offers a condensed review of the literature (various industry-sponsored and independent studies along with organizational guidelines were examined) describing the usefulness of palliative care in the outpatient oncology clinic setting and presents a case study illustrating this concept.

Background

Research has shown that when palliative care is integrated into the care of patients with cancer, regardless of whether it takes place in the hospital or the clinic or at home, it is beneficial to patients and healthcare systems alike (Cunningham, Ollendorf, & Travers, 2017; Rabow, Dahlin, Carlton, Bischoff, & Ritchie, 2015). The literature supports the integration of palliative care into oncology practice (Zimmermann et al., 2014), which has been shown to improve symptom burden and pain management (Temel et al., 2010). Brumley et al.