
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Attentive visitors: developing a training program to support community-based volunteers in their palliative care signposting role

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Background: Community volunteers often notice palliative care (PC) needs that healthcare professionals (HCP) and family caregivers miss, potentially playing an important signposting role. In order to fulfill this role, volunteers need knowledge about PC needs and community resources; and they should have good relational, communication and observation skills. These skills and knowledge can be enhanced through training.

Aims: To develop a training program to support community homecare volunteers in their signposting function.

Methods: Learning objectives were formulated based on the results of a qualitative study in which 7 focus groups (15 community volunteers, 20 HCP's) and 10 in-depth interviews (6 community residents with PC needs, 4 informal caregivers) were conducted. The content and structure of the training were developed in collaboration with a psychologist trainer, stakeholder organizations and community volunteers.

Results: The training program consists of a didactic workshop (5-6 hours) and a follow-up session (2-3 hours) in which reflection, exchange of knowledge/experiences are central. The workshop aims to achieve learning objectives related to increasing awareness and knowledge of the volunteer role and signposting function, PC needs and signals, community resources, communication with the community resident and communication with HCPs. Case discussions, reflection exercises and role plays are used to enhance volunteers' insights and skills related to recognizing, describing, responding to and communicating patient needs to HCPs. During the follow-up session, participants will be invited to share experiences and reflect on what the didactic workshop has meant for their volunteer work since.

Conclusion: The training responds to existing needs in community homecare and tries to strengthen community volunteers in taking up their signposting function. The training program will be piloted and evaluated Fall 2022-Spring 2023.

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