

PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

CHAPTER 31

Palliative care services care for people with a life threatening illness beyond the reach of cure, as well as their families, friends and significant others. In addition to symptom and pain relief, the service recognises the many physical, emotional and spiritual issues that arise with a life threatening illness, as well as providing bereavement support to carers and family after the person has died. The continuum of care is covered by multidisciplinary palliative care services: community services to home and residential aged care facilities, acute hospital consultative services, two inpatient palliative care units totalling 30 beds, a Day Hospital, and outpatient clinics at five sites.

The majority of patients using the SWSAHS service are local residents, although there is some inflow from Central Sydney AHS, SE Sydney AHS, Western Sydney AHS and Illawarra AHS residents to the inpatient facilities at Braeside and Camden, as well as directly to the specialist community nursing teams.

Access to palliative care is mandated through the NSW Health Chronic Care Frameworks for Cancer, Respiratory and Cardiac and guidelines support palliative care in Aged Care and Dementia services. The NSW Health "Dying with Dignity Guidelines" promote both a palliative approach and access to Palliative Care services. 'Palliative Care Australia' has national standards for services delivery and planning guidelines, both of which are used by the SWSAHS service.

Current Services

The palliative care service operates as an Area model of service delivery through existing sector structures. The Area Director of Palliative Care, in conjunction with the Area Nurse Coordinator, has responsibility to determine the directions and set standards and models for clinical service delivery. The Area Director of Palliative Care has clinical governance responsibility for all Palliative Care medical appointments. All medical appointments, apart from Director of Palliative Care Braeside Hospital, are to the Area service and are not site specific.

In 2003 there were a total of 2,456 patients seen by medical staff, new 1,013 and follow-up 1,443, and the nursing service saw 1,580 new patients. Statistics are not available for the extensive work done with family and friends of the terminally ill person. The Area also has a part-time volunteer coordinator to recruit, train and support volunteers providing services to clients/carers at home or in the Camden Palliative Care unit.

There is an Area-wide after-hours support service funded through the Chronic and Complex Care initiative. The ward staff at Braeside Hospital and at Camden Palliative Care Unit manage the calls from the 1300 phone number and in 2003 there were 1,067 calls. The community services provide evening and weekend services funded in part through the Chronic and Complex Care initiative.

Bankstown Health Service

Consultative service available to inpatients referred to Area Palliative Care medical service, and for nursing to Bankstown Palliative Care nurses based at Bankstown Community Health Centre. There is a weekly outpatient clinic and 0.4 FTE Social Work.

Fairfield Health Service

Consultative service available to inpatients referred to the Area Palliative Care medical service and for nursing to Fairfield Palliative Care Nursing service based at Prarieewood Health Centre.

Braeside Hospital

There are 20 palliative care beds in Braeside Hospital, which is located on the Fairfield Hospital campus. In 2003, there were 408 inpatient admissions, at an occupancy of 84%. There is also a Day Hospital service and outpatient clinic run at Braeside. The Area Medical Director, Area Nurse Coordinator and Area Palliative Care Volunteer Coordinator offices are based at Braeside Hospital. Medical staffing is funded at 1.0 FTE Medical Director, 0.5 FTE Staff Specialist and 2.0 FTE registrars, which are employed as a mix of registrar, resident and CMO. Allied health services such as social work, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, diversional therapy and chaplaincy are available here. There is a designated Bereavement Coordinator position at Braeside Hospital providing counselling to carers/family of patients who are or have been registered with the Area Palliative Care service. In addition, Braeside Hospital provides very valuable support and infrastructure to the Area service.

Liverpool Health Service

There is an on-site hospital consultative Palliative Care service to inpatients provided by both medical and nursing. The Area Palliative Care Medical Service provides 1.5 FTE Staff Specialists to provide in hospital consultative and community visits. There is a weekly outpatient clinic. Liverpool Hospitals employs 2.0 FTE registered nurses and 1.0 FTE CNC for palliative care.

Macarthur Health Service

The Area Medical Palliative Care service provides 2.0 FTE Staff Specialists and 1.0 FTE Registrar to undertake hospital consults, community consultations and outpatient clinics at Campbelltown and Camden, as well as the inpatient unit at Camden Hospital. Nursing consultation is available from the Macarthur Palliative Care nursing service based at Rosemeadow Community Health Centre.

Camden Hospital Palliative Care Unit

There are ten palliative care beds in this inpatient unit, which opened in September 2001. In 2003, there were 287 inpatient admissions, at an occupancy rate of 93%. In addition to the senior medical cover outlined above, the inpatient unit has 1.0 FTE resident and access to part-time social work, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Wingecarribee Health Service

A consultative service is available to inpatients who are referred to the Area Palliative Care Medical Service or for nursing to the Palliative Care Nursing service based at Wingecarribee Community Health Centre.

Research and Teaching

There are conjoint appointments with the University of NSW. Education support and research projects have been established in the Philippines, Ireland and Cambodia. Strong links have been developed with the Murrumbidgee Division of General Practice, including the Griffith Area Palliative Care Service, which is currently exploring linkages with the SWSAHS Area Palliative Care Service providing GPs with telehealth reviews, case discussion, 24-hour access to specialist medical advice and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) accredited workshops.

SWSAHS Palliative Care Service - Key Indicators (collected since January 2002)	Jan-03	Feb-03	Mar-03	Apr-03	May-03	Jun-03	Jul-03	Aug-03	Sep-03	Oct-03	Nov-03	Dec-03	Total
Number of new patients registered with Area Palliative Care Services	112	129	121	118	138	134	120	127	127	134	126	131	1,517
Percentage of new referrals contacted within 48 hours	92	89	79	88	76	83	85	89	85	88	89	91	86%
Home deaths as percentage of total deaths	28	17	32	31	11	19	29	40	23	18	26	19	24%
Clients registered 100+ days prior to death, as percentage of total deaths	29	13	29	25	29	21	36	28	32	20	32	29	27%
Number of bereavement visits	53	38	37	39	46	35	33	33	46	21	32	32	445
Percentage of new referrals visited in 72 hours	86	79	77	77	69	75	77	82	78	74	79	80	78%
Total number of deaths	89	55	81	74	90	90	79	69	82	70	93	77	949
Number of after hour calls to													
Braeside	39	63	75	41	53	34	52	46	23	41	33	43	543
Camden	33	37	42	42	36	37	38	35	37	47	63	77	524
<i>Total</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>1,067</i>
Proportion of target population who have attended an acute palliative care unit that have a comprehensive discharge summary sent and faxed to their GP within 72 hours of discharge													
Braeside	100	95	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	90	100	99%
Camden	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100%
Total number of admissions													
Braeside	39	24	27	22	43	35	38	46	40	27	35	32	408
Camden	29	20	20	25	24	22	21	35	24	25	16	26	287
<i>Total</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>695</i>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The WHO definition of Palliative Care be adopted as standard and ensure that all services providing end of life care have the basic clinical and communication skills required.
- Palliative care services continue to operate as an Area-wide specialised service with inpatient care based at Camden and Braeside Hospitals.
- Palliative care beds be increased across the Area. Additional palliative care beds be provided at Liverpool, Braeside and Camden Hospitals.
- An Area service model be developed including a centralised intake system utilising the Palliative Care Electronic Clinical Record (ECR).
- Palliative care services be enhanced based on staffing levels standards of Palliative Care Australia, as adopted by NSW Health.