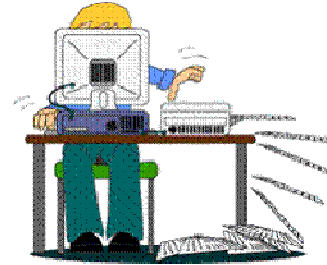


Media Watch

...is distributed weekly to colleagues active or with a special interest in **hospice palliative care and end-of-life issues** – to help keep them abreast of current, emerging and related issues, and to inform discussion and encourage further inquiry. Following is an annotated listing of recent articles, reports, etc., with links to the original source.

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Compiled & Annotated by Barry R. Ashpole

Grief in the workplace: Scroll down to [International](#) and 'Managers must support bereaved employees.'

[Canada: National](#)

Alzheimer's Awareness Month

Caregivers often feel threatened by behaviours of person with Alzheimer's disease

ALZHEIMER'S FOUNDATION FOR CAREGIVING IN CANADA | Press release – 13 January 2009 – According to a new survey among caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease, behavioural symptoms such as agitation and aggression are common in their loved ones and take a significant toll on primary caregivers, especially those who feel scared or threatened by these behaviours. <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/January2009/13/c6831.html>

- CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH | Press release – 13 January 2009 – **'Alzheimer's: Who's taking care of the caregiver?'** Researchers are finding ways to help caregivers stay mentally and physically healthy, overcome their challenges, and better understand the disease. <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/January2009/13/c6951.html>
- CBC | Online report – 13 January 2009 – **'Alzheimer's caregivers reluctant to seek help with patients' aggression.'** Family members caring for people with Alzheimer's disease are often reluctant to talk about common but treatable behavioural changes such as mood swings and aggression, a new survey suggests. <http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2009/01/13/alzheimer-care.html>

Of related interest:

- U.S. | Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation (Press release) – 15 January 2009 – **'Alzheimer's often missed as cause of death.'** Alzheimer's disease may be under-reported as a cause of death and often is not cited on death certificates, new research suggests. The findings point to a lack of understanding of the natural course of Alzheimer's and suggest that more people may die of the disease than is generally believed. <http://www.pr.com/press-release/126323>

Physician-patient communications

The doctor said what?

B.C. | *Vancouver Sun* – 12 January 2009 – Doctors and hospitals must do a far better job of ensuring patients understand instructions, given research showing nearly two-thirds of adults have trouble comprehending health care issues, says a B.C. geriatrics and palliative care expert. "Doctors often don't explain things simply or properly, yet it's our obligation to communicate well," Dr. Romyne Gallagher said in an interview, noting that the word doctor comes from the Latin "docere" which means "to teach." A Canadian Public Health Association report last year from an expert panel on health literacy found 60% of adult Canadians lack the capacity to obtain, understand and act upon health information or services and to make health care decisions independently. <http://communities.canada.com/vancouvernews/blogs/medicinematters/archive/2009/01/12/the-doctor-said-what.aspx>

Canada: Provinces

Assisted suicide and euthanasia

If doctors who won't kill are 'wicked,' the world is sick

BRITISH COLUMBIA | Canwest News Service (Editorial) – 14 January 2009 – Talk about Orwellian. A woman described as a "leading expert in ethics" has declared that doctors who refuse to kill their patients are "genuinely wicked." I'm not making this up. Mary Warnock, a British baroness, told the Northern Ireland Forum for Ethics in Medicine & Healthcare last week that doctors who refuse to break their Hippocratic Oath are evil. It seems that virtually every day, I read another story that proves the world – and what is accepted as good and true – is being turned on its head. <http://www.canada.com/vancouvernews/news/editorial/story.html?id=ac85f7a9-1e89-49f7-86dd-4bcf1a25ee4d&p=1>

In response:

- CANWEST NEWS SERVICE | Letter to the editor – 16 January 2009 – **'Don't follow Oregon's lead ...'** A doctor practising in Oregon, where assisted suicide is legal, shares a story about a patient. <http://www.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/theeditorialpage/story.html?id=6590ed8e-cfa1-48bb-8a5c-17a253a52816>

From Media Watch dated 01.12.09.

- IRELAND | *Belfast Newsletter* – 6 January 2009 – **'Doctors who refuse euthanasia 'wicked,' expert claims.'** Doctors who refuse to help terminally ill patients to kill themselves when they request to die are "genuinely wicked," a leading ethics expert told a public debate in Belfast. <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/ignoring-a-death-wish-is.4845993.jp>

A judge confronts his fear of AIDS

ONTARIO | TORSTAR News Service – 10 January 2009 – An Ontario judge so misinformed about how AIDS is spread that he ordered an HIV-positive witness to be masked in his courtroom has since spent a day at Casey House hospice, where he shook hands with patients. The unusual educational visit and a later face-to-face discussion with his chief justice have ended the disciplinary proceedings against Justice Jon-Jo Douglas. "He knew that we were not his greatest friends when he first came here, so I thought that it took courage for him to come," said Dr. Ann Stewart, medical director at the Toronto hospice for people with HIV/AIDS, who had criticized Douglas. <http://www.thespec.com/News/BreakingNews/article/494031>

U.S.A.

Recommendations to alter hospice reimbursement system

MCKNIGHT'S LONG TERM CARE | Online report – 13 January 2009 – Medicare should pay a hospice more per day when a beneficiary enters the system and less as the beneficiary's stay increases in length, Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) officials said recently. Recognizing that longer hospice stays often times translate into more Medicare reimbursements for the hospice care provider, MedPAC recommended decreasing reimbursement rates after a certain initial period of time. Reimbursements would increase again in the event of a patient's death, when a greater effort of care is needed. MedPAC plans to recommend these changes to Congress in March; they would not go into effect until 2013. MedPAC officials also voted to direct the Department of Health & Human Services Office of the Inspector General to investigate possible conflicts of interest between hospice care and long-term care facilities. There is a possibility ... that there may be some inappropriate referrals from nursing homes to for-profit hospice care facilities, which result in longer stay patients. <http://www.mcknights.com/MedPAC-to-recommend-that-Congress-alter-hospice-reimbursement-system/article/123919/>

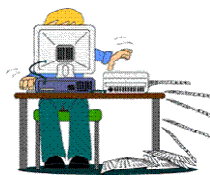
- SOUTH CAROLINA | Associated Press – 15 January 2009 – **'House agrees to restore hospice program.'** The House has given key approval to a resolution to restore money cut from a hospice care program. <http://www.live5news.com/Global/story.asp?S=9683275>

Family caregivers form lobby group

NEW HAMPSHIRE | *Concord Monitor* – 13 January 2009 – The Caregiver Action Group plans to lobby the Legislature for a bill that would allocate money as pay for family caregivers. Caregivers are the forgotten part of the health care crisis. With no financial compensation for caregivers, how can (they) survive, let alone keep (themselves) healthy, psychologically and spiritually? A 2007 study by the National Alliance for Caregiving estimated there are 44 million unpaid caregivers in the U.S. (and they) spent on average more than \$5,500 a year on their caregiving responsibilities. <http://www.concordmonitor.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090113/NEWS01/901130327/1043/NEWS01>

- *WALL STREET JOURNAL* | Online report – 14 January 2009 – **'Relatives can be paid to look after elderly.'** Caring for a family member is a responsibility many bear. It can also be a source of income. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123197145248583055.html?mod=googlenews_wsj
- NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR CAREGIVING | Press release – 13 January 2009 – **'The National Alliance for Caregiving calls on the new Congress to provide relief to the nation's 50 million family caregivers.'** Family caregivers represent a huge but invisible "silent workforce" over 150 times larger than Wall Street's workforce and over 176 times larger than the automobile industry workforce. <http://sev.prnewswire.com/health-care-hospitals/20090113/SF5845913012009-1.html>

Barry R. Ashpole



My involvement in palliative and end-of-life care dates from 1985. As a communications specialist, I've been involved in or responsible for a broad range of initiatives at the community, regional, provincial and national level. My work focuses primarily on advocacy, capacity building and policy development in addressing issues specific to those living with a life-threatening or terminal illness – both patients and families. In recent years, I've applied my experience and knowledge to education, developing and teaching on-line and in-class courses and facilitating workshops for frontline care providers.

Public health group supports assisted suicide

COLORADO | Citizen Link – 12 January 2009 – The American Public Health Association (APHA) claims to be "leading the way" to protect Americans from "serious health threats." Yet, according to a 2008 policy statement, assisted suicide is not among these threats.¹ The APHA is endorsing assisted suicide for terminally ill adults, but rejects the phrase "assisted suicide" as "inaccurate."
<http://www.citizenlink.org/content/A000009051.cfm>

1. APHA Position Statement (Dated 10.28.08.): **'Patients' Rights to Self-Determination at the End of Life.** The APHA has long recognized patients' rights to self-determination at the end of life and that for some terminally ill people death can sometimes be preferable to any alternative.
<http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=1372>

Of related interest:

- WASHINGTON | *The Olympian* – 15 January 2009 – **'(State) Department of Health taking comment on assisted suicide rules.'** The Department of Health has completed stage one of writing Initiative-1000 – legalizing physician-assisted suicide – into state law.
<http://www.theolympian.com/126/story/727722.html>

Potential patient safety risks related to misinterpretation of living wills and DNR orders

PENNSYLVANIA | The Earth Times – 12 January 2009 – More than 200 events reported to the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority in part show that healthcare providers, patients and their family members may not understand the different meanings and consequences of living wills and DNR (do not resuscitate) orders, which may pose patient safety risks. Potential patient safety risks related to the misinterpretation of living wills and DNR orders may inadvertently result in the delivery of unwanted care or the withdrawing or withholding of otherwise appropriate care that should have been given to the patient. <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/pennsylvania-patient-safety-authority-releases-december-advisory,676585.shtml>

From Media Watch dated 01.12.09.

- *AMERICAN MEDICAL NEWS* | Online journal article – 5 January 2009 – **'Defective directives? Struggling with end-of-life care.'** According to a growing body of research, there are serious shortcomings with this type of directive. <http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2009/01/05/prsa0105.htm>

Perceptions of dying and death

OHIO | *The Columbus Dispatch* – 11 January 2009 – Beginning today, the newspaper begins a series examining dying and death through the eyes of health care providers who deal with it daily. The newspaper's Death Perceptions website includes interactive databases using demographic and geographic information, that allow readers to see how the people of Ohio experience death.¹
http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2009/01/11/Dead.ART_ART_01-11-09_A1_48CF283.html?sid=101

1. Death Perceptions website: <http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/multimedia/death/death.html>

Of related interest:

- *ARIZONA* | *Daily Star* – 12 January 2009 – **'Enjoy life more by being ready for its end, hospice nurse says.'** Tani Bahti has watched, year after year, as the lack of knowledge (about dying and death) caused terrible pain, family strife and regrets. <http://www.azstarnet.com/metro/275466>
- *NEW YORK TIMES* | Editorial – 12 January 2009 – **'In defense of death.'** The late Richard John Neuhaus was no stranger to death. As a young minister, Neuhaus worked with the terminal ill at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn where he accompanied two or three to their deaths each day.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/13/opinion/13brooks.html?ref=opinion>

The drawn-out indignities of the American way of death

WASHINGTON POST | Online editorial – 11 January 2009 – As a hospitalist, I see adult patients of all ages and complexities, most of whom make good recoveries and return to life as they knew it. But taking care of the thread-worn elderly, those facing an eternal winter with no green in sight, is definitely the most difficult thing I do. That's because never before in history has it been so hard to fulfill our final earthly task: dying. It used to be that people were "visited" by death. With nothing to fight it, we simply accepted it and grieved. Today, thanks to myriad medications and interventions that have been created to improve our health and prolong our lives, dying has become a difficult and often excruciatingly slow process. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/09/AR2009010902298.html?referrer=emailarticle>

In response:

- WASHINGTON POST | Letter to the editor – 18 January 2009 – '**A Better way to treat the dying.**' A palliative care consultant wished the editorial had mentioned the options of palliative care services in the hospital and the benefits of early entry into a community-based, home hospice program. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/17/AR2009011702399.html>

International

Managers must support bereaved employees

IRELAND | *Irish Health* – 15 January 2009 – The Irish Hospice Foundation is calling on managers to learn how to support their bereaved employees. It is hosting a new series of seminars for managers and human resources personnel as part of its Grief at Work programme. The aim is to provide managers with an understanding of the grieving process and a framework for managing bereaved staff in the workplace. An estimated 300,000 people are directly affected by bereavement each year in Ireland. Around one in 10 of the working population is directly affected by a death annually while one in 25 workers is caring for a seriously ill relative. <http://www.irishhealth.com/article.html?id=14908>

Of related interest:

- U.K. (Wales) | BBC News – 16 January 2009 – '**Bereaved children not supported.**' Children in Wales who suffer a bereavement are not getting enough support, a cancer charity has claimed. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/south_east/7832087.stm
- U.K. | *Children & Young People Now* – 15 January 2009 – '**Bereavement in custody guidance.**' The Childhood Bereavement Network has published a briefing paper revealing that bereavement is a major issue for young people in secure settings. <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/login/873088/>
- U.S. | KansasCity.com – 16 January 2009 – '**How do you comfort a grieving person who doesn't have a faith?**' The ministry of presence doesn't require the recitation of creedal beliefs or theological teachings. Rather, it requires a caring, listening heart. <http://www.kansascity.com/255/story/985042.html>

Links & Back Issues of Media Watch

Please alert this office if you encounter any difficulty. Every effort will be made to find an alternative means of access. Alternatively, copy/paste the URL into the address bar of your browser. All links are confirmed as being active before Media Watch is distributed; they remain active, however, for only a limited period of time.

Back issues of Media Watch are held on file for a limited time and available on request.

Policy urged for dying patients

U.K. (Scotland) | BBC News – 14 January 2009 – Members of the Scottish Parliament have called for a national policy on the resuscitation of terminally ill patients to prevent a postcode lottery of palliative care in Scotland. Holyrood's audit committee also urged the Scottish Government to improve data collection by health boards on services provided for terminally ill patients. It comes after a report published last year found inconsistencies in care for different illnesses across the country. The government pledged £3m to improve palliative care in October 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/7828259.stm

From Media Watch dated 08.25.08.

- U.K. (SCOTLAND) | BBC News – 21 August 2008 – **'Better end of life care pledge.'** Audit Scotland found that 90% of specialist care was delivered to cancer patients, although the disease accounted for fewer than 30% of deaths. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/7572815.stm

Curbs on opioids hinder pain management

INDIA | Express News Service – 12 January 2009 – Despite the simplification of the rules and the procedures that facilitate access to oral morphine for medical use, continuing restrictions on other opioids – including injectables – hinders effective management of pain and suffering in advanced stage cancer patients and other terminally ill. As many as 15 states have amended their Narcotics & Psychotropic Substances Act to ensure supply of oral morphine for acute, chronic and cancer pain relief. A Central Government directive, however, does not mention other forms of opioids. <http://www.expressbuzz.com/edition/story.aspx?Title=Curbs+on+opioids+hinder+pain+management&artid=C%7C/zzPp0FMo=&SectionID=mvKkT3vj5ZA=&MainSectionID=fyV9T2jla4A=&SectionName=nUFeEOBkuKw=&SEO>

Of related interest:

- U.K. | *Medical News Today* – 14 January 2009 – **'Pain treatment research reports often cannot be trusted.'** Journals, conferences, and websites in the pain management field are growing at an alarming rate and much of the information presented is often erroneous or misleading. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/135478.php>
- *PAIN TREATMENT TOPICS* | Online report – 16 January 2009 – **'Prescription opioid abuse, addiction less common than many believe.'** Current research indicates that abuse and addiction potentials of opioid analgesics prescribed for patients with chronic pain are not as common or widespread as many seem to believe. <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/548166/>

[Media Watch Posted on Palliative Care Network-e Website](#)

The mission of the Palliative Care Network-e (PCNE-e) is to promote education amongst health care professionals. It provides a platform to exchange information and materials.

Links: PCN-e <http://www.pcn-e.com/>; Media Watch <http://www.pcn-e.com/MW.htm>.

Palliative Care Network (PCN) is a volunteer initiated project. Using widely available internet technology, it provides a platform to teach, interact, and exchange ideas with colleagues in places around the world where the knowledge gap is wider than the technology gap. The PCN directory gives health care professionals worldwide access to colleagues to provide educational support.

PCN link: <http://www.palliativecarenetwork.com/Aboutushtml.html>

Forum on End of Life in Ireland

Improving end of life care in Ireland

IRELAND | *Irish Health* – 12 January 2009 – Around 30,000 people die in Ireland each year and research indicates that most people would like to die in their own homes, surrounded by their loved ones, pain-free, conscious and able to communicate. However the reality is that three in four people die outside of their own home and 40% die in busy acute hospitals. The Irish Hospice Foundation is inviting people to take part in its newly established Forum on End of Life in Ireland, which will be formally launched in March. During the year, this forum will examine a range of issues relating to end of life care in Ireland, including the care available to older people, the plight of carers, regulation of the funeral industry, and the need for the public to engage in advance care planning. <http://www.irishhealth.com/article.html?id=14875>

- IRELAND | *Irish Times* – 12 January 2009 – **'On death and dying.'** The Forum on End of Life in Ireland is an ambitious and distinctive programme ... inviting participation from all sectors of Irish society. <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2009/0112/1231515549069.html?via=mr>

Of related interest:

- *IRISH MEDICAL TIMES* | Online report – 15 January 2009 – **'Survival of patients discharged to long term care.'** The first data on life expectancy of elderly people in long term care facilities has been published in the *Irish Medical Journal*.¹ http://www.imt.ie/news/2009/01/survival_of_patients_discharge.html
- 1. *IRISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* (Online article posted 15 January 2009). **'Survival of patients discharged to long term care.'** http://www.imj.ie/Issue_detail.aspx?issueid=+&pid=3882&type=Papers

It is monstrously wrong that patients cannot ask for euthanasia

U.K. | Times Higher Education (Editorial) – 8 January 2009 – Soran Reader provides insight into her own experience of being diagnosed with a brain tumour, and the availability – or otherwise – of euthanasia in the U.K. The law must be changed (she opinions) so that people facing fatal or self-destructing conditions do not also have to endure this agony of not being able to protect their selves and their loved ones. The necessary changes are not dramatic, obscure or complex. Best methods for euthanasia need to be identified. Patients need to be enabled to state preferences, the circumstances under which they want to be killed. There need to be witnesses to make sure statements are authentic and considered, not coerced or motivated by psychological distress, fear or ignorance. Medical teams need to be enabled to give effect to the preferences the patients state. Friends and family members who help at any stage in the process need to be assured that they will not have to face criminal accusations at the same time as they are suffering grief and loss. <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=404913>

- U.K. | *Sunday Express* – 18 January 2009 – **'Actress Praise for euthanasia doctor.'** Actress Julie Walters has called for a national debate on assisted suicide after playing the part of a terminally ill doctor who takes her own life. <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/80534/Julie-s-praise-for-euthanasia-doctor>
- U.K. | Christian Institute – 16 January 2009 – **'Suicide website law to be made clearer.'** The Government is planning changes to the law ... to make it clearer that websites offering to help people kill themselves are acting unlawfully. <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090116/suicide-website-law-to-be-made-clearer/>
- U.K. (Scotland) | *Fife Today* – 13 January 2009 – **'Members of the Scottish Parliament hear views on assisted dying.'** Campaigners calling for a referendum on assisted dying take their case to the Scottish parliament. <http://www.fifetoday.co.uk/latest-scottish-news/MSPs-hear-views-on-assisted.4868364.jp>

Journal Articles

Redefining death: A new ethical dilemma

AMERICAN MEDICAL NEWS | Online editorial – 19 January 2009 – To secure life-saving vital organs, some physicians are pushing the boundaries of what constitutes death. The ramifications for the transplant system could be profound. <http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2009/01/19/prsa0119.htm>

Hope, truth, and preparing for death: Perspectives of surrogate decision makers

ANNALS OF INTERNAL MEDICINE, 2008;149(12):861-868. Although many physicians worry that openly discussing a poor prognosis will cause patients and families to lose hope, surrogate decision makers' perspectives on this topic are largely unknown. The authors report that overall, 93% of surrogates (in their study) felt avoiding discussions about prognosis is an unacceptable way to maintain hope. The main explanatory theme was that timely discussion of prognosis is essential to allow family members to prepare emotionally and logistically for the possibility of a patient's death. Other themes that emerged included surrogates' belief that an accurate understanding of a patient's prognosis allows them to better support the patient and each other, a moral aversion to the idea of false hope, the perception that physicians have an obligation to discuss prognosis, and the notion that some surrogates look to physicians primarily for truth and seek hope elsewhere. A few surrogates felt physicians should withhold prognostic information because of a belief that discussing death could be emotionally damaging to the family or could negatively affect the patient's health. <http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/abstract/149/12/861>

Continuity of care and intensive care unit use at the end of life

ARCHIVES OF INTERNAL MEDICINE, 2009;169(1):81-86. There is increasing concern about discontinuity of care across transitions (e.g., from home to the hospital) and how it might affect appropriate medical management. The authors examined changes over time in outpatient-to-inpatient continuity of care in individuals hospitalized with advanced lung cancer and its relationship to end-of-life intensive care unit (ICU) use via retrospective analysis of the linked Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results-Medicare database. Outpatient-to-inpatient continuity decreased from 60.1% in 1992 to 51.5% in 2002. Factors associated with decreased continuity included male sex, black race, low socioeconomic status, being unmarried, treatment by a hospitalist, and treatment in a teaching hospital. <http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/169/1/81>

Of related interest:

- *DIMENSIONS OF CRITICAL CARE NURSING*, 2009;28(1):13-7. **'A comfortable place to say goodbye.'** The nurse's actions in the intensive care unit setting can promote hope for a comfortable place to say goodbye for the patient and his or her loved ones and the nursing staff and physicians. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19104246>

Understandings of death and dying for people of Chinese origin

DEATH STUDIES, 2009;33(2):153-174. This article introduces the primary beliefs about ancestor worship, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and traditional Chinese medicine that have influenced Chinese people for thousands of years, particularly in relation to death and dying. These cultures and traditions remain important for Chinese people wherever they live. Over a long period, Chinese people have integrated these philosophies and religions to form the basis of their culture and traditions. Although they agree that death is a natural part of the life span, a unique belief about death and dying has emerged among the Chinese from this integration. From this, the people find a significant definition of death and dying. **N.B.** Link unavailable.

Medically assisted nutrition for palliative care in adult patients

HOSPITAL MEDICINE | Published online 16 January 2009. Many palliative care patients have a reduced oral intake during their illness. The management of this can include the provision of medically assisted nutrition with the aim of prolonging the length of life of a patient, improving their quality of life, or both. The aim of this study was to determine the effect of medically assisted nutrition on the quality and length of life of palliative care patients. There were four prospective non-controlled trials (including one qualitative study) that studied medically assisted nutrition in palliative care participants, and one Cochrane systematic review (on Motor Neurone disease). The authors concluded that there are insufficient good quality trials to make recommendations for practice with regards to the use of medically assisted nutrition in palliative care patients.

<http://beckerinfo.net/JClub/2009/01/16/medically-assisted-nutrition-for-palliative-care-in-adult-patients/>

Contacting bereaved relatives

The views and practices of palliative care and oncology health care professionals

JOURNAL OF PAIN & SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT | Published online 15 December 2008. The objective of this study was to explore the current practice of health care professionals in oncology and palliative care by contacting bereaved relatives, and to elicit their views regarding the purpose, the optimal means, the format, timing, and content of these contacts. This area has been relatively unexplored and lacks adequate models for health care professionals. This study provides some insight into current practice and hopes to facilitate further discussion of this topic.

[http://www.jpmsjournal.com/article/S0885-3924\(08\)00559-9/abstract](http://www.jpmsjournal.com/article/S0885-3924(08)00559-9/abstract)

Physician-patient communications

Cancer patients' decisions about discussing Internet information with their doctors

PSYCHO-ONCOLOGY | Published online 9 January 2009. Participants (in this study) most frequently reported discussing information in order to be proactive in improving their health. Other reasons included appealing to the doctor as expert, wanting to become more educated, meeting a psychological or coping need, and checking up on or testing the doctor. Of the participants, caregivers were more likely than patients to cite checking up on or testing the doctor as a reason for discussing Internet information. Many factors influence cancer patients' and caregivers' decisions about discussing Internet information with their doctors. The coherence of the reasons across the communities in this study and in other studies suggests that this typology of reasons is both thorough and valid. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/121631305/abstract>

Of related interest:

- U.S. | CarePages (Press release) – 14 January 2009 – **'New report shows that people are turning to online health communities for emotional support.'**¹ An increasing number of people are using the Internet not just to get information but to find, give and receive emotional support. Moreover, recent scientific studies provide evidence that such support has significant health benefits. http://www.prweb.com/releases/emotional_support/carepages_report/prweb1860844.htm
- 1. *Online healthcare gets personal: Health 2.0 and the healing power of supportive communities* http://cms.carepages.com/export/sites/default/CarePages/en/Press/white_papers/online_health_care_gets_personal.pdf
- U.S. | *Newsweek* – 8 January 2009 – **'Little white-coat lies.'** There are big lies. And little lies. And somewhere in between there are the lies we tell our doctors. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/178493>

Books & Resources

Somewhere Towards the End

U.K. | *The Guardian* (Book review) – 13 January 2009 – In many ways *Somewhere Towards the End* is an account of an ordinary, though unusually active, old woman. She asserts at the end that "an individual life is interesting enough to merit examination" and her book is testament to this. It is interesting enough because it is approached with such remarkable honesty. It is extraordinary to hear a writer of any age describing and analysing her most personal and embarrassing experiences and it is extraordinary to hear an 89-year-old considering without taboos or sentimentality exactly how she feels about the death she knows cannot be long in coming. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jan/13/biography.features>

Religion or belief: A practical guide

U.K. | National Health Service (NHS) – 9 January 2009 – This "guidance document" offers advice to NHS organizations and services to help them to comply with the "equality legislation" recently introduced, and also to understand the role of religion or belief in the context of healthcare. http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093133

Arts & Entertainment

Art exhibit, programs to focus on end-of-life care, aging

U.S. | *The Daily Reflector* (North Carolina) – 19 January 2009 – The fabric and thread art of an internationally celebrated artist will be displayed by the Greenville Museum of Art as part of a week dedicated to raising awareness about end-of-life care and aging. The exhibit stems from a unique partnership uniting the museum, a multidisciplinary team of East Carolina University faculty, local community leaders and the End of Life Care Coalition of Eastern North Carolina. It showcases the artwork of Deidre Scherer, which will be on display until the end of February. Numerous events, lectures and workshops are scheduled between Tuesday and Saturday, hosted by the members of the partnership. The exhibit of tapestries features two series of Scherer's work that focus on end-of-life experiences, 'Surrounded by Family and Friends' and 'The Last Year.' <http://www.reflector.com/news/art-exhibit-programs-to-focus-on-end-of-life-care-aging-380836.html>

Quotable Quotes

I am at the end of my earthly life. There is much that I have contemplated these last few months of my illness, but as one who is dying I have especially come to appreciate the gift of life. I know from my own experience that patients often face difficult and deeply personal decisions about their care. However, I also know that even a person who decides to forgo treatment does not necessarily choose death. Rather, he chooses life without the burden of disproportionate medical intervention.

Cardinal Joseph Louis Bernardin (1928-1996)

'The Line Between Life and Death'

U.K. | BBC Radio 4 – 8 January 2009 – Jonathan Miller explores the complex questions that arise from trying to define death. The British neurologist, also celebrated in the fields of the arts and sciences, asks what it means for something to be alive so that it can die, what counts as death for different species and, if we pass a genetic inheritance on to our children, does this mean that we are in some sense immortal? Miller also considers the consequences of there being no actual definition of death in U.K. law for medicine and ethics, and why even if we avoid all risks to life we will all eventually die. Links to Episode 1 & 2: http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/linebetween_lifedeath/

Worth Repeating

Morbid fascination: teaching the history of death (in the classroom)

ACADEMIC EXCHANGE QUARTERLY | Online journal article – 22 June 2005 – The history of death is rarely, if ever, taught as a course despite increased attention from researchers. This article discusses the author's experience in designing and teaching a freshmen history course on death and dying. The article includes sample assignments and readings as well as samples of student evaluations and an explanation of the rather surprising results. The author concludes: "Talking about death is a widely held taboo in modern society, or so the theorists say. That taboo contributed to making this course initially popular but it also laid at the basis of its effectiveness as a vehicle for personal and intellectual development, both for the students and the instructor. This course has been one of the most satisfying teaching experiences that I have ever had. Some of my ideas worked better than others and much of its success can be attributed to the unintended consequences of allowing students to draw their own conclusions from historical examples in a supportive classroom environment – not necessarily my lectures. Still, this was the rare occasion where teaching goes well beyond the subject matter and reaches into places I never expected it to go." http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3325/is_ /ai_n29205534

Of related interest:

- CANADA (Ontario) | *Peterborough Evening Telegraph* – 15 January 2009 – '**Students learn about funerals.**' City students attended a bereavement workshop in a bid to dispel myths people hold about the funeral profession. <http://www.peterboroughtoday.co.uk/news/Students-learn-about-funerals.4878855.jp>

Something Missed or Overlooked?

If you come across a media report, journal article, etc., relevant to hospice palliative care or end-of-life issues not mentioned in this edition of Media Watch, please alert this office so that it can be included in a future issue of the weekly report. Thank you.

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