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Mentor: Dr. Katie Ronald

Title: *Assessment of the Illinois Pharmacists' Understanding of Palliative Care*

Purpose

To assess Illinois pharmacists' level of involvement and understanding related to palliative care.

Methods

The 22 question palliative care survey was distributed through Qualtrics after the IRB was approved. Once the survey was finalized an email was sent to the Illinois Pharmacists Association (IPhA) and the Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists (IChP). These organizations then distributed the survey to their respective members. The email gave Illinois pharmacists an idea of what the research would be about and how it could benefit the pharmaceutical profession as a whole. Participants were able to access the survey through an anonymous link within the email. The survey was open to access from October 29, 2018 to November 30, 2018.

Results

A total of 152 responses were recorded with 131 of those participants completing the entire survey. The majority of pharmacists stated that they rarely (26.1%) or never (45.5%) engage in palliative care at their practice site. The majority of survey respondents selected that a goal of palliative care is improving quality of life (51.7%) and/or optimizing symptom management (43.6%) as opposed to halting the progress of life (2.6%) and/or doing whatever is necessary to keep patient alive (2.1%). When asked to rank objectives of palliative care respondents thought providing relief from pain and other distressing symptoms (30.9%) and enhancing patient's quality of life (32.4%) were the most important palliative care objectives. When asked what challenge would make it the most difficult to educate patients about palliative care the 3 answers that made up the majority of responses were not enough time to discuss palliative care topics (37.3%), patients being unwilling to talk about palliative care topics (23.9%), and pharmacists' lack of knowledge about palliative care topics (23.1%). Pharmacists were very interested in receiving additional education about pain management based on disease state (60.9%), symptom management based on disease state (53%), and mental health management for patient and family (45.1%). In addition to the topics listed above, most pharmacists were at least very interested or moderately interested in receiving additional education about communication with patient and family, spiritual needs, cultural beliefs re: death and dying, and legal aspects of patient care decisions.

Conclusion

The Illinois pharmacists who completed this survey displayed an understanding of the goals of palliative care and they believed enhancing quality of life as well as providing symptomatic relief was of the utmost importance for patients receiving palliative care. Despite multiple challenges making it difficult to educate patients about palliative care, pharmacists were willing to receive education about a plethora of palliative care topics to assist them in educating patients in the future. As the pharmacy profession progresses, the hope is that pharmacists will feel more comfortable discussing palliative care topics with patients and implementing palliative care management plans with other healthcare providers.