

AUTUMN 2021 | ISSUE 1

PALLIATIVE NEXUS NEWSLETTER

Palliative Care Research



Jennifer Philip



Welcome to the Autumn Edition

It is my great pleasure to introduce you to Palliative Nexus Newsletter - first edition!

Many of you will know that Palliative Nexus is a research group based at the University of Melbourne and St Vincent's Hospital, with strong partnerships with VCCC, Peter Mac and Royal Melbourne Hospitals. Our goal is for all people with advanced illness to receive high quality palliative care that is equitable, timely, delivered as a standard of care and underpinned by evidence.

So with that in mind, it is really exciting to reach out to you to both share some of our work and also to let you know some new developments and events.

But perhaps the key thing we hope to do with this newsletter is to further enhance our sense of connection as a field. Everyone is working hard and there is so much great work going on - all around the state, and indeed all around the country - that we should be sharing and celebrating.

So tell us what is happening in your patch, and we will aim to share it more broadly - our newsletter is every season. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this Autumn edition.

UPDATE

RESEARCH IN FOCUS THIS EDITION

- The Choice Project
- Improving care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with advanced cancer

RESEARCH IN FOCUS

Our research activities span across four research programs: (1) Service Models for Serious Illness; (2) Evolving Communities; (3) Clinical Trials; and (4) Personalised Care. Our research brings together clinicians, researchers and allied health professionals with a mission to improve equity, access and quality of care in serious illness.

The Choice Project

Dr Anna Collins and Olivia Wawryk

Referral to palliative care frequently occurs late in the illness course, despite evidence to support the benefits of early intervention. To address some of the barriers to palliative care integration, The Choice Project adopts a systematic approach to community engagement to palliative care.

As part of our Evolving Communities Research Program, the Choice Project involves engaging people with cancer and the general community to improve understandings around options of care in serious illness, and testing the impact of our approach on patient and community and health systems outcomes.

It is a phase 2, online randomised controlled trial involving six test conditions. Its aim is to evaluate the feasibility and preliminary impact of a narrative approach to public health intervention that involves a series of 2-minutes visual educational stories to communicate information about palliative care.

It is hypothesised that the visual educational stories will provide a feasible public health approach to communicate information about palliative care, which can: (1) shape the choices made by people about the kind of care they would want in the event of serious illness; (2) lead to improved community and patient understanding of palliative care; and (3) reduce uncertainty about these choices.

The project consists of two participant cohorts: (1) healthy members of the general community; and (2) patients who are currently receiving cancer care at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne or Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

Findings from the community cohort revealed that a narrative approach to public health communication was acceptable to community members, and feasible to deliver online (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32552310/>).

Recruitment for the patient cohort is ongoing at both St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

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Engaging cancer patients & the general community on options of care in serious illness

Improving care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with advanced cancer

Dr Stacey Panozzo

Cancer is one of the leading causes of burden of disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, hereafter respectfully referred to as Aboriginal peoples, face challenges in access to and engagement with cancer care services across the cancer continuum – from diagnosis, treatment, follow-up care provision, management of disease to access and engagement with palliative care services.

Using a co-design approach through consumer partnership, we seek to explore how to improve palliative care access and provision for Aboriginal peoples with advanced cancer and provide a series of recommendations.

The team at Palliative Nexus, led by Assoc Prof Brian Le, are collaborating with Professor Gail Garvey – a Senior Aboriginal Research Fellow at St Vincent's Health Australia and Menzies School of Heath Research, together with consumer representatives and Aboriginal health professionals across multiple hospital sites in Melbourne.

This 12-month project is funded by the Western and Central Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service (WCMICS), with the sharing of research outcomes set for late 2021.

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Using a co-design approach to improve palliative care access

NEWS & MEDIA

The Limbic featured our work including systematic review [advancing the field of palliative care in COPD & ILD](#)

Women during COVID-19

Jennifer Philip spoke candidly in the VCCC Alliance Newsletter on women during COVID-19 and how it shone a light on the disproportionate load they took on during lockdown with homeschooling and home care - often at a cost to their paid work and careers. [Read her reflections on challenging the value of caring.](#)

VCCC Strategic Program Steering Groups

Palliative Nexus is excited to be part of VCCC's nine specialised steering groups to enable achievement of ambitious goals to improve outcomes for more Victorians with cancer. In particular, Dr Anna Collins is co-chairing Program 1 - Data Linkage and Prof Jennifer Philip as co-chair on Program 8: Health Equity in cancer care along with member Dr Stacey Panozzo. We look forward to hearing more about the achievements of these inspiring initiatives. [Read more here](#)

Welcome Aaron, our new PhD student!

Please join us in welcoming Aaron Wong, who recently started his PhD with Palliative Nexus. Aaron's PhD, entitled '[Accelerating Pharmacogenomic Guided Opioid Prescribing into Clinical Practice in Cancer Patients](#)', was developed in response to the current trial-and-error approach in which opioids are currently prescribed to patients – specifically, 20% of patients are required to switch to a different opioid due to adverse effects. Opioids are the backbone of cancer pain management and requires an effective method to guide objective, safe and effective individualised prescribing.

This project has the potential to transform the way we care for all people with cancer who require pain relief – ensuring the provision of the right drug to the right person.

PAL-SPECTIVES SERIES

Our Pal-Spectives Series engages in thought-provoking conversations with leading and interested thinkers in the field of palliative care on their work, life and what makes them leap out of bed.

WED 5 MAY @ 4PM WEBINAR:

Join us for a conversation with **A/Prof Bruce Rumbold**, Director, Palliative Care Unit, La Trobe University, whose perspectives from the disciplines of sociology, theology, public health and community development have enriched our networks, our conversations and our service delivery.

[**REGISTER**](#)

What's happening in our space

PUBLICATIONS

Highlighted publication

Most Australians die in hospitals, yet the provision of bereavement care in these settings is not routine or systematic. In this study we aimed to develop a model of bereavement care for a tertiary hospital system, developed from empirical studies and expert group consensus.

[Developing a model of bereavement care in an adult tertiary hospital](#)

Other publications

[Validation of the responding to urgency of need in palliative care \(RUN-PC\) triage tool](#)

[A systematic review of classifications systems to determine complexity of patient care needs in palliative care](#)

[The impact of public health palliative care interventions on health system outcomes: A systematic review](#)

[Referral criteria to palliative care for patients with respiratory disease: a systematic review](#)

[End of life in hospitalised prisoners: a group comparison of palliative medicine and hospital use](#)

CONTACT US

If you have something you would like us to share:

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*Research - working together to improve
the lives of those with serious illness*