



Paramedics Providing Palliative Care at Home: The Nova Scotia (and PEI) Experience

Background

- Approx 27% of palliative care patients make at least 1 visit to ED
- Paramedics facilitate over 50% of ED visits for palliative care patients
- 9-1-1 often called for escalation of symptoms



Paramedics Providing Palliative Care at Home

Paramedics respond to ~700 calls per year for patients with palliative goals of care¹

Some are connected to VON, Continuing Care, and/or palliative programs...



...Some are not



Connected patients/families tell us² that they call 9-1-1 if:



Their usual supports are delayed or not available



They feel they need a rapid response



Emotional and stressful situation and they "panic"

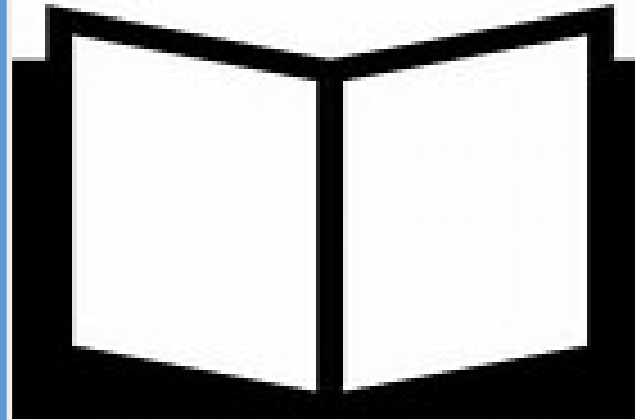
I had a number on the magnet to call paramedics, they were here in 15 mins. She was dead, but they kept me company. (Family)

The Program



Palliative Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG)

- A CPG for paramedics responding to patients receiving palliative care focusing on symptom management (e.g., pain, breathlessness, nausea, agitation, psychosocial distress, fear, etc.)



Education Intervention

- Collaboration with with Pallium Canada to develop a new curriculum for palliative care that is specific for paramedics (“LEAP Mini for Paramedics”) – taken by all paramedics in NS in early 2015



EHS Special Patient Program (SPP)

- Database to make patient care wishes accessible to paramedics

Paramedics agree palliative care is part of the job

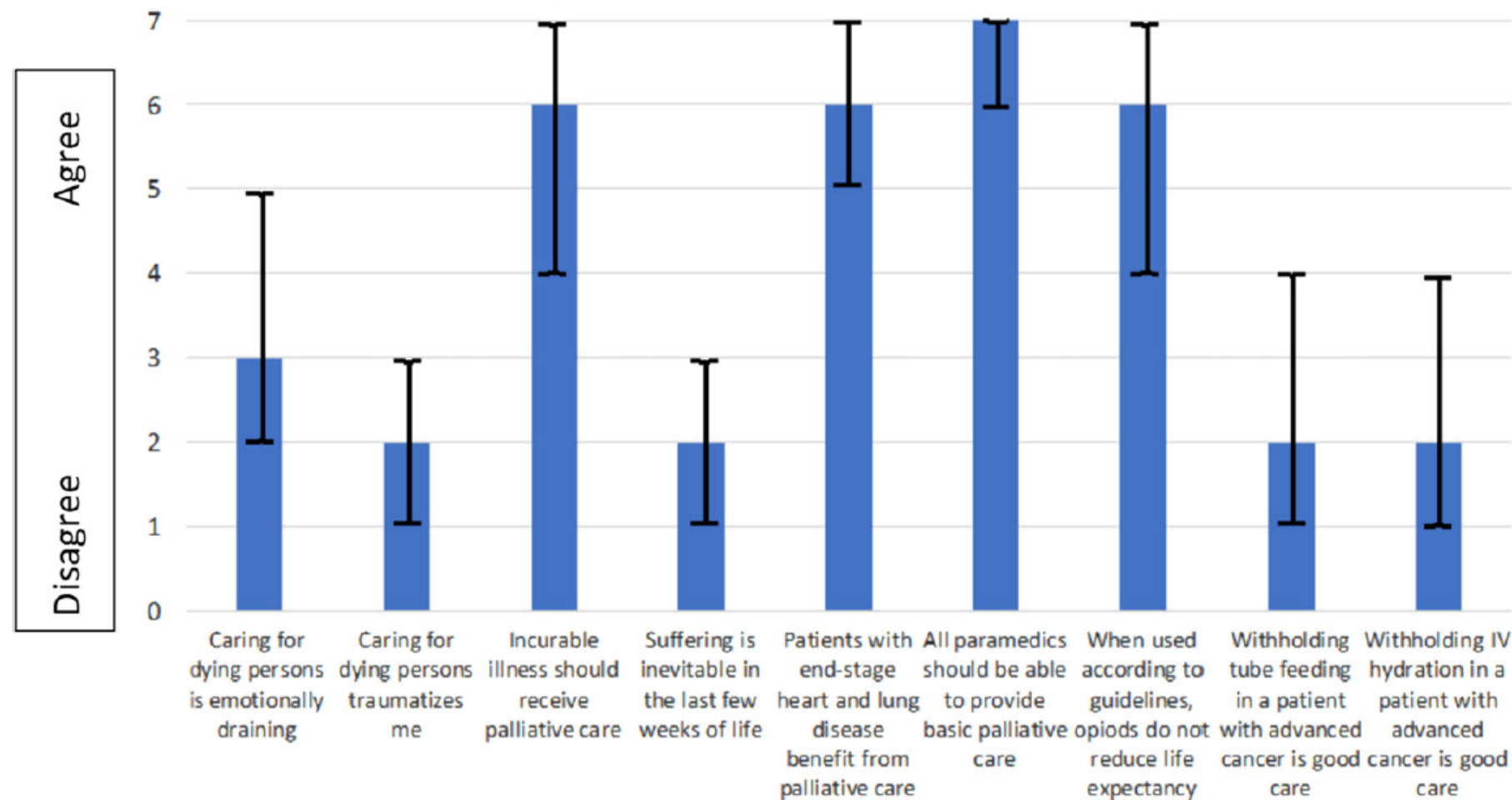
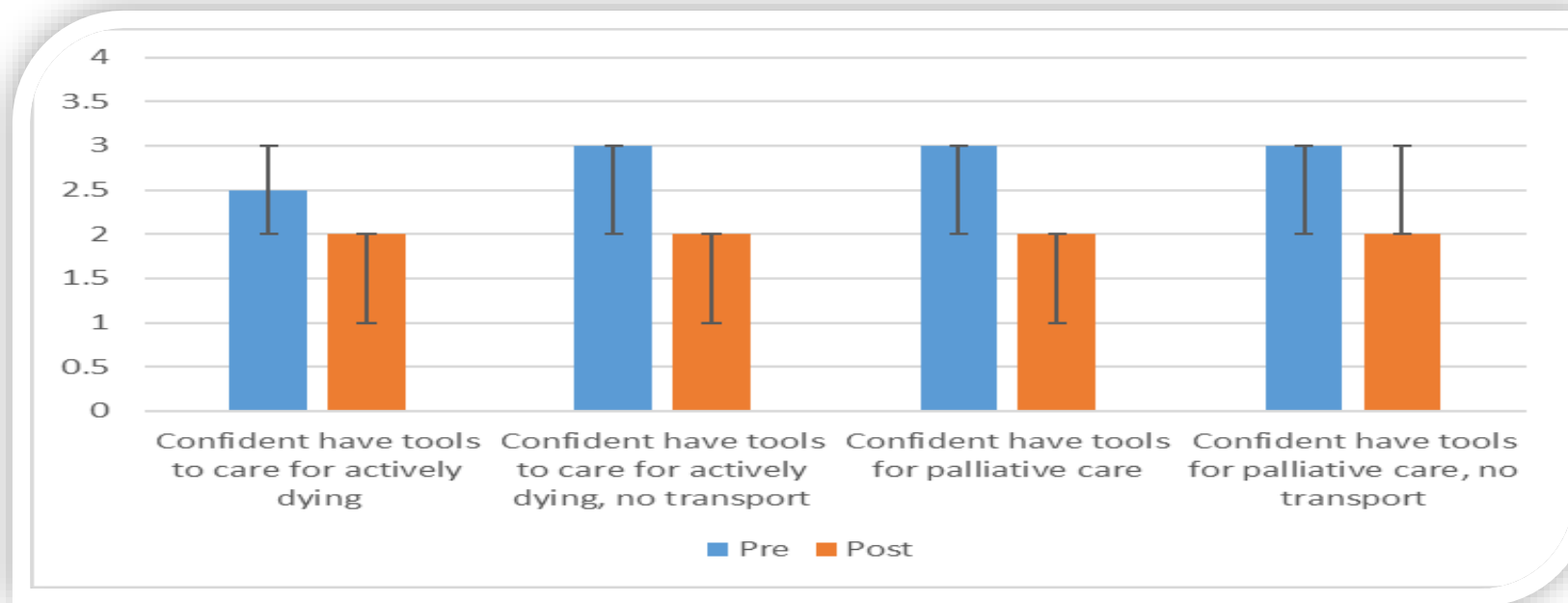


Figure 2. Paramedic attitudes (Part B) toward palliative and end-of-life care (median and IQR)

Paramedics are more confident when formal programs are in place



QUOTES FROM PARAMEDICS:

"I think the program is absolutely fantastic. It really covers an important patient need, and relieves strain from an emergency system, especially when patients do not require, nor want, a trip to the ER department. I think the more that paramedics can do for this patient type the better."

"I believe palliative care training has helped elevate paramedic care in this particular sector to an excellent degree."

Results:

Paramedic Comfort & Confidence (POST)

- **Additional training** and more hands on experience with palliative care calls as these can be infrequent for individual paramedics
- Having a **palliative specialist** available to support EHS online physicians
- Exploring expanding PCP **scope** of practice for palliative patients (with online support)
- Further expansion of the palliative CPG **formulary**
- Discussion of personal pride and satisfaction palliative care has brought to their role as a paramedic

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Patients & Families: Being Enrolled in the SPP

Fulfilling care wishes

- Location of care/death wishes will be respected/ fulfilled by paramedics

Peace of mind

- Simply being enrolled increases family confidence to care for their loved one at home

Feeling prepared for emergencies

- Comfort knowing the paramedics about them, their situation, and care plan in advance of an emergency call

QUOTES FROM PATIENTS/FAMILIES:

“Great program - paramedics will be so much more knowledgeable when attending to a call to a registered patient. More awareness of patient's needs”.

“Support for my mom to fulfill her wishes to remain in the home and receive care without having to be transported to hospital .”

Patients and families benefit

24/7 Availability

- Comfort knowing that the program was available 27/4, in the event of an acute crises

Professionalism and compassion of the responding paramedics

- Families described the paramedics as going “above and beyond” for their loved ones during the crises

Symptom relief

- Ability of paramedics to alleviate symptoms enough that the patient/family were able to stay home

Program continuation

- Families expressed a desire to see the program continue
- Without the program, their loved one would not be able to be cared for at home

QUOTES FROM FAMILIES:

“It's a great program. There are times when making a trip to outpatient is very stressful and exhausting for my father, but we're not comfortable assessing him ourselves here at home.”

“It relieves stress on myself as the EMS team is trained to provide palliative care, in home and transport to hospital at just the right time, and that they help us make the right decision, for mother.”

“Very professional, very supportive and empathetic, gentle and respectful. I haven't had any incident where we felt they weren't providing the best possible service.”

System Findings

- The total time committed to a call (including transport and offload in the ED) is not longer when the patient remains at home
- Transports dropped (treat and release rate 47.6%)
- Being in the SPP is associated with even lower proportion transported
 - Registration in the SPP has a “protective” effect in avoiding transport to ED

QUOTES FROM PARAMEDICS:

“I still remain incredibly proud and humbled by this role we as paramedics are now in. I hope our model can lead to the creation of similar paramedic care models across the country.”