



Northern Health Palliative Care

Increasing Physical Comfort: The Role of Care Aides and Personal Support Workers

A palliative approach can be integrated into care by all care providers. Personal Support Workers & Care Aides often spend a considerable amount of time with patients nearing end of life and are the first to notice signs of change or discomfort.

Steps to Increasing Physical Comfort

1. Identify when a patient/client is not comfortable

- Remember to assess for non-verbal and less obvious signs that someone is not comfortable

2. Gather information

- What is happening? What is wrong?
- When did it start?
- Can you rate it on a scale?
 - 0-10 (0 = no symptoms and 10 = the worst imaginable)
 - Mild, moderate, severe
- Where do you feel it?
- How does it feel?
- What makes it better or worse?
- What would be helpful?
- What can I do to assist you?
- What do you want to see happen?

3. Communicate: Record and Report

Clear Recording

- Write in language that is understandable
- Be brief and to the point
- Do not make assumptions/judgments
- Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Avoid abbreviations
- Include who you reported to and when

Clear Reporting

- Identify the person's name and time of interaction
- Clearly identify the concerns
- Summarize gathered information
- Include current comfort measures
- Include any other symptoms or changes
- Include your request

4. Implement comfort measures

- Use non-pharmacological interventions to help prevent and treat symptoms
- Provide education and support to the patient and family

If you are a PSW or Care Aide interested in learning more about palliative care, please email Palliative.Care.Consult.Team@northernhealth.ca for more information on our upcoming 16 week self-directed online course – “Integrating a Palliative Approach: Essentials for Personal Support Workers”.

Reference:

Murray, K. (2014). *Integrating a Palliative Approach: Essentials for Personal Support Workers*. Victoria, Canada: Life and Death Matters