



Northern Health Palliative Care

Symptom Framework for Personal Support Workers

The Symptom Framework for Personal Support Workers (PSWs) provides question prompts to guide information gathering about pain and other symptoms a person may be experiencing. It can be used by PSWs to gather and communicate information about a person’s symptoms.

Symptom Framework for PSWs		
O	Onset	When did it start?
P	Provoking/Palliating	What makes it better or worse?
Q	Quality	How does it feel? Can you describe it?
R	Region	Where do you feel it?
S	Severity	Can you rate it on a scale? 0 = no symptom and 10 = the worst imaginable Small, medium, large Mild, moderate, severe
T	Treatment	What treatment do you think might be helpful?
U	Understanding	What do you think might be happening?
V	Values	What are our goals for this symptom?
W	What else?	What else do you want me to know or do? For the PSW: Given your knowledge of this person, what do you see and what do you believe would be helpful?

Instructions: Use the Symptom Framework for PSWs to gather information when:

- a symptom is reported by the person or family
- medication has been changed or an extra dose is given for symptom management
- the person’s behaviours suggest they may be experiencing pain or another symptom.

Use these questions to help you develop a clear report for the nurse and the team. You can rephrase and adapt the questions to address the symptoms the person is experiencing and accommodate the person’s communication abilities.

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 12 week self-directed online course – “Integrating a Palliative Approach: Essentials for Personal Support Workers”.

Reference:

Murray, K. (2020). *Integrating a Palliative Approach: Essentials for Personal Support Workers Second Edition*. Victoria, Canada: Life and Death Matters