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: