

PROJECT FACT SHEET

Local Researchers Work to Improve Palliative Care

Principal Investigators: Wendy MacCaull
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Heather Jewers(left)

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Palliative care is a combination of therapies that address the physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and practical needs of individuals who are dying and those of their families. Care is provided in a variety of settings based on the patient's needs and involves an intricate network of health professionals, family, and volunteers, and a variety of assessment and information- management needs.

In Canada, palliative care programs are not standardized, which can create difficulties in providing service and assessment. There is a need to coordinate care delivery and use common assessment tools to better meet the needs of individuals, their

families, and their service providers.

Wendy MacCaull, Professor in the Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science, and Heather Jewers, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, both of St. Francis Xavier University, are co-principal investigators of an interdisciplinary team that is designing a workflow system to help facilitate the complex process of patient-centered palliative care in the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority. A mathematical model of patient-centered palliative care, based on the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (2002) Model to Guide Hospice Palliative Care is being developed. A key feature of the design is that the system, when fully implemented, will adapt dynamically to a patient's changing condition and improve continuity of care

"In time, this system may be reconfigured for palliative care across Canada," notes Dr. MacCaull.

"By integrating this patient-centered system into the emerging Canada Electronic Health Records system," notes Ms. Jewers, "we can improve patient care, streamline documentation, enhance communication, and identify emerging issues."

There is an interest from administrators, clinicians, and researchers to continue development on the project. By increasing the coordination of care, the Canadian health care system can reduce risk and repetitive assessment, facilitate patient-centered care, increase continuity of care, identify gaps and barriers, and provide improved health services delivery.

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