Making choices for life

Fact Sheet 3

AUTHENTIC DIVERSITY

KEY MESSAGES

- Death and dying are among the most significant and sacred events in all societies.
- Supporting the client’s and their loved ones cultural, linguistic and spiritual needs and preferences; accepting they may be different to yours.
- Ensure all palliative care services identify and support the cultural, linguistic and spiritual needs of care clients and their families, including rituals and practice around death and dying.
- Respect and value the uniqueness of each person.
- Upholding privacy, confidentiality and disclosure of information as per scope of practice of the care provider.

- Consider the use of interpreter services when care plans are developed and reviewed with the client and their loved ones.
- Highlight culturally appropriate strategies that are acceptable to all involved.
- Where possible provide information and support services in the preferred language.
- Consultation with the client and their loved ones is very important. Religious, ethical and cultural sensitivity must be taken into account when discussing things such as:
  - Importance of the family – more than the traditional sense of family (e.g. Kinship for those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; family of choice for those who identify as LBGTI)
  - Discussing private issues with health professionals or non-family members (who the client and family wish to speak to for advice)
  - The amount of information they want to receive concerning diagnosis and prognosis.
  - Whether it is appropriate to communicate with the family about diagnosis and prognosis (who is told and who is not)
  - Importance of food or refreshments (offence may be taken by the family if refusal is given)
  - Feelings about hospitals (taboo subjects and choices)
  - Attitudes to pain management (religious and spiritual choices)
  - Certain medical practices that they want withheld (what is in the Advanced Care Directive?).
  - End-of-life rituals. For example, last rites, visits from friends and family, patient giving away belongings (involvement of other services)
  - Post-death rituals. For example, what needs to happen to the body in preparation for burial (involvement of other services)
  - Post-death procedures. For example, autopsy or organ donation (cultural sensitivity, funeral directors’ choices).

WHY IT WORKS

- Identifying and reflecting on your own emotional responses to death and dying and raising issues and reactions to your coordinator enables you to recognise diversity.
- Using a non-judgmental approach encourages the maintenance of the client’s needs and preferences.
- Creating a supportive environment ensures the client’s and their loved one’s lifestyle, social, spiritual and cultural choices are acknowledged.
- Recognising the client’s holistic needs supports diversity.
- Monitoring the impact of the client’s needs and referring to appropriate members of the care team in line with organisational protocol to ensure the client is supported.

REFERENCES