Quality End of Life Care for All (QELCA©): an innovation in end of life care education for nurses working in acute hospitals

Liz Bryan, Director of Education and Training, St Christopher’s Hospice

The Challenge:

- Workforce development is a priority of the UK Department of Health’s End of Life Care Strategy (2008).
- Only approximately 5% of those who die will do so in a hospice, a specialist centre in palliative and end of life care, and yet over 50% will die in an acute hospital.

QELCA© enables hospice nurses to effectively share best practice and contribute to the development of the generalist workforce?

Hospices, as tertiary centres, can provide direct, effective and economically viable end of life care training for whole teams of end of life care providers.

The QELCA© Programme:

- A whole team of clinical managers (e.g. band 6 nurses from an acute general medicine unit) released for training at the hospice in small groups of 3 or 4 at a time.
- 5 days comprising both practical (participating and observing) and theoretical (listening and debating) learning activities.
- Two days in practice working alongside hospice nurses interspersed with three days working with an educational facilitator.
- A safe and supportive learning environment in which participants can reflect on current personal and organisational practice in the light of new information and observations.
- Once the Action Plan has been presented to the sending organisation, the team is released to participate in Action Learning over the following six months.

National Pilot

In partnership with Help the Hospices and the NHS National End of Life Care Programme (NEoLCP), QELCA© was piloted with teams from 17 acute hospitals through the ‘Route to Success’ initiative.

Trainers from 21 hospices were trained in 2012/13 by St Christopher’s Hospice to deliver QELCA©.

On-going evaluation consistently indicates that participation on the QELCA© programme results in significant attitudinal change. Whole teams of clinical managers return to practice empowered to make a real difference to patient and carer experience at end of life.

Contact information:

For further information about QELCA© and to access the 2012/13 evaluation report executive summary go to: www.stchristophers.org.uk/training

To contact Liz Bryan, Director of Education and Training, email; l.bryan@stchristophers.org.uk

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The Way Ahead

- Further Development and Dissemination of QELCA© for Nurses: St Christopher’s, in partnership with Help the Hospices and NHS Improving Quality (NHSIQ), formally National End of Life Care Programme (NEoLCP), will continue to offer training to hospices and to evaluate the impact of QELCA© on end of life care nursing practice.

- Further Development of QELCA© for Other Settings and Disciplines: Specialist palliative care units should recognize that they are a valuable resource for empowering and enabling generalists to improve patient care at end of life and should consider replicating the QELCA© programme or an adapted programme based on the underpinning principles for other disciplines, such as junior doctors or for community or care home staff.

- Quality Assurance of QELCA© Training: QELCA© is copyrighted to St Christopher’s Hospice and anyone claiming to deliver the programme must have been trained and be registered as a QELCA© trainer.

- Implications for Workforce Development: Educators and commissioners need to work collaboratively to find the most effective ways of enabling NHS staff to improve the quality of end of life care within current resources. QELCA© targets senior ward nurses and is proven to be cost-effective in providing learning that changes not only their practice but empowers them to lead change within their teams and in their organisations.

- Role of Hospices in Future Workforce Development: It is recommended that Health Education England (HEE) and Local Education Training Boards (LETBs) work with senior nurse managers and specialist palliative care providers to consider ways to commission the delivery of the QELCA© programme to small groups of clinical managers within their acute trusts.