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Developing a Workforce to Improve Health Outcomes in Palliative Care: the National Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates Project

Abstract:

The Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates (PCC4U) Project is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. It aims to promote the delivery of quality palliative care to all people who are dying, by educating new graduates in the health professions in the principles and practices of palliative care.

As part of the project, a range of evidence-based palliative care undergraduate curriculum resources have been developed, along with strategies to promote uptake and optimise outcomes at a student, organisational and systems level.

The strategies focus on the design and use of learning resources, individual teaching staff, the wider academic and professional community, and the organisational, political and regulatory context of health professional education. They were piloted in nine undergraduate courses across medicine, nursing and allied health disciplines in 2005 and are now being implemented in all other Australian universities that offer medical, nursing, and allied health undergraduate training.

Key indicators for evaluating outcomes from the project include learning outcomes for students who participate in the program, curriculum outcomes, in terms of the extent to the core principles have been incorporated and academic outcomes, in terms of usefulness and effectiveness of the resources. Key system level outcomes from this initiative are also being assessed, including networks, partnerships, and other factors which influence health outcomes for people needing palliative care.