

# Comfort Care Rounds

## Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care Alliance (QPC-LTC)



Social Sciences and Humanities  
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**Comfort Care Rounds, Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care, Version 1, [www.palliativealliance.ca](http://www.palliativealliance.ca).**

For more information regarding the project please visit [www.palliativealliance.ca](http://www.palliativealliance.ca) or email our team at [palliativealliance@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:palliativealliance@lakeheadu.ca)

## Introduction

This module is designed to empower healthcare providers and palliative care volunteers to hold Comfort Care Rounds in a long-term care (LTC) home. Comfort Care Rounds are intended to provide a LTC home-wide forum for case-based discussions about deceased residents or those who are dying. The main focus is on providing palliative care education, reflection on resident cases, and peer support for staff and volunteers.

Two LTC homes participated in evaluating Comfort Care Rounds. The direction provided in this toolkit was informed by an evaluation of the Comfort Care Rounds, in a project entitled, Improving Quality of Life for People Dying in Long-Term Care Homes. The results of the evaluation have been submitted in a manuscript to the International Journal of Palliative Medicine. A brief synopsis of the evaluation is outlined in this module.

## Description of Comfort Care Rounds

### Background

Comfort Care Rounds, originally *Pain Rounds*, were requested and attended by the registered staff in the evaluation LTC homes. However, in recognizing the staff's interest in the broader issues of providing palliative care, Comfort Care Rounds were developed to not only address pain management but all aspects that palliative care encompasses. Also with the expanded focus, the all members multidisciplinary team, including palliative care volunteers, were invited to attend. A main focus was promoting Personal Support Worker (PSW) participation.

The following provides a summary of the key components to be considered when implementing Comfort Care Rounds.

## Considerations

The following provides a summary of the key components to be considered when implementing Comfort Care Rounds. The summary is based on the information provided by the evaluation project participants:

- What is the purpose of Comfort Care Rounds?
- Who will attend?
- What are essential participant roles?
- What will the format look like?
- What atmosphere needs to be created?

## What is the Purpose of Comfort Care Rounds?

Comfort Care Rounds are intended to provide a forum for staff and palliative care volunteers to discuss and reflect on deceased residents and/or those who are transitioning to or receiving palliative care. Comfort Care Rounds provide opportunity for the following activities:

*Tip: Ask attendees what topics they would like to discuss*

### 1) Review Resident Deaths

- Ensure that a list of deceased residents or those transitioning to or receiving palliative is compiled prior to Comfort Care Rounds. Assign this task to an attendee.
- Create an agenda with the list of residents which will be reviewed during the Comfort Care Rounds.
- Review the resident list during Comfort Care Rounds to prompt attendees to reflect on important issues, challenges or successes.

### 2) Reflect and Debrief on Resident Deaths

- An identified attendee should be responsible for facilitating the reflection and debrief session.
- Encourage attendees to reflect on or debrief general palliative care and end-of-life care experiences.

### 3) Case-based Discussion and Planning

- Identify an attendee(s) that will prepare and present a resident palliative care case(s).
- Develop goals around the purpose of the case-based discussion: care planning, debriefing or education.

#### 4) Palliative/ End-of-Life Care Educational Component

- Determine an attendee(s) that will be responsible for providing palliative/end-of-life care education. In the evaluation homes, the Palliative Pain and Symptom Management Consultant and Comprehensive Advanced Hospice Palliative Care Education (CAPCE) trained nurse were primarily responsible for this role.
- Attendees may wish to identify educational topics to be addressed at the Comfort Care Rounds. If the educational component is predetermined, be sure to include the topic in Comfort Care Rounds advertisements/agenda to encourage attendance.
- As a result of reflection and debrief, palliative/end-of-life care education topics may be identified as “teachable moments.” They can be addressed as they arise during conversation, or planned to be discussed at future Comfort Care Rounds.

**Tip:** When trialing Comfort Care Rounds, different emphasis can be placed on the four components. For example, in one of the trail LTC homes, a group of staff preferred the case-based discussion and planning over the reflection and debrief. To know whether the Comfort Care Rounds are meeting the staff needs it is important to receive their feedback on the format and structure.

#### Who Will Attend?

In recognizing that all staff members and volunteers can be involved with residents receiving palliative care, consider a multidisciplinary/volunteer approach to Comfort Care Rounds. In addition to the palliative care volunteers, LTC home-wide team members that participated in the evaluation included: PSWs, registered and registered practical nurses, social workers, a Palliative Pain and Symptom Management consultant, activation staff, chaplain and managers.

**Tip:** Due to scheduling and balancing workload demands, ensuring multidisciplinary representation was difficult to achieve in the evaluation LTC homes. Try to have everyone’s input when scheduling Comfort Care Rounds.

**Tip:** Consider inviting guest speakers.

## What are essential participant roles?

In addition to participating in the Comfort Care Rounds discussions, there are several roles and responsibilities:

- Derive the development of Comfort Care Rounds
- Develop, circulate and/or direct the Comfort Care Rounds' agenda
- Recruit attendees/ advertise Comfort Care Rounds
- Facilitate Comfort Care Rounds
- Offer informal/formal education
- Record and circulate Comfort Care Rounds' minutes or discussion points
- Provide support to fellow staff members (Social Work)

**Tip:** *The Palliative Pain and Symptom Management Consultant was a key person in developing and facilitating the Comfort Care Rounds.*

## What will the format look like?

In order to promote staff attendance and interest, Comfort Care Rounds can be scheduled in a variety of ways. Examples from the evaluation homes include:

- Meeting for an hour with the members of the multidisciplinary team on a specific day and week of the month
- Meeting for a half hour with the multidisciplinary team on a specific day of the month
- Meeting bimonthly with members of PSW staff and alternately with members of the registered staff \*\*\* Not a multidisciplinary approach

**Tip:** *When developing the Comfort Care Rounds, seek staff input on whether a multidisciplinary approach is favoured and seek staff input on format/scheduling of Comfort Care Rounds.*

## What Atmosphere Needs to be Created?

As attendees are encouraged to share and discuss both positive and negative palliative care experiences, a comfortable atmosphere needs to be created. In a multidisciplinary setting, try to create an environment where participants feel that their contribution is valued.

## Strategies for Successful Comfort Care Rounds

Both evaluation LTC homes used a variety of methods to advertise and encourage staff attendance at the Comfort Care Rounds. These methods included:

- email reminders
- memos and posters in the nursing station
- personal encouragement to attend
- assigning a staff member to attend
- notice in the education calendar

*Tip: See Comfort Care Round advertisement poster [Appendix A](#)*

## Manager Support

In efforts to promote and show their support of the Comfort Care Rounds, managers in the evaluation homes are often promote staff attendance and also participate.

## Scheduling and Format Comfort Care Rounds

- By having a consistent schedule (eg. The third Monday of the month at 2pm), attendees should know when Comfort Care Rounds are and can prioritize their attendance. In addition, try to seek attendee input into their scheduling.
- To improve the format, participants in the evaluation LTC homes suggested that rather than having staff from each unit gather in a central meeting room, hold smaller scale Comfort Care Rounds on the individual LTC home units. These smaller scale Comfort Care Rounds would be focused on discussing an individual resident during their end-of-life care, or reflecting on a recent death. By having a shorter meeting on the unit, focused on one resident's palliative or end-of-life care plan, it would help to ensure that more of the multidisciplinary team members actually involved in that individual's care would be able to attend and discuss.
- Participants also suggested holding Comfort Care Rounds in a "Lunch and Learn" format so to not take time away from resident care or other unit duties.
- Not all interested staff or volunteers will be able to attend Comfort Care Rounds. Consider disseminating key messages or lessons learned from Comfort Care Rounds in the LTC home newsletter or other format. See Appendix B for "Comfort Care Nuggets" which are included in

## Interest

- In order for staff to take time away from their duties on the unit or other educational priorities, determine whether staff/volunteers are interested or have passion for improving their palliative care approach and practice.

## Outcomes of Comfort Care Rounds

Comfort Care Rounds require staff/volunteer interest, time and commitment. The participants in the Comfort Care Rounds evaluation identified the following benefits and outcomes:

- 1) New learning or refresh knowledge about palliative care
- 2) Improved communication/working relationship between staff members
- 3) Increased confidence in providing palliative and end-of-life care
- 4) Empower PSWs in providing and discussing palliative care
- 5) Opportunities for debrief and reflection
- 6) Increased awareness and use of palliative care human resources

## Reference

Wickson-Griffiths, A., Kaasalainen, S., Brazil, K., Crawshaw, D., McAiney, C., & Turner, M. (2012). Comfort Care Rounds: A qualitative evaluation of an innovative palliative care improvement strategy. Submitted to the International Journal of Palliative Medicine.

## Appendix A: Advertisement Poster

### Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care A Community-University Research Alliance

## Come and attend **Comfort Care Rounds**

**All staff** and volunteers welcome

This is not just for nursing- the entire care team plays a role in quality Palliative Care for our residents and families

**Tuesday May 17th 1:30pm to 2:00pm**

**Please be prompt!**

Location: Boardroom

**Refreshments** will be provided!

We will review the goals of Palliative Care and have case based discussions as suggested by **you**.

Come celebrate the good work that you do and problem solve the issues that you come across

The Palliative Pain and Symptom Management Consultant will be with us



## Appendix B: Advertisement Poster

### Comfort Care Nuggets Notes from Comfort Care Rounds

A multi-disciplinary group engaged in a discussion to review recent deaths. The group included PSW's, Registered staff, Chaplain, Palliative Care Consultant, and palliative care project research members

The residents' families really appreciate the quality of care given by the staff. This is great encouragement!

The Palliative Care Consultant for Creek Way Village, noted to think of "what are we doing *for* the person instead of *to* the person".

This can be helpful for staff and families when making care decisions at end-of-life. These decisions could include nutrition, hydration, and life prolonging interventions.

Please come to the next meeting on **Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup>** in the Boardroom, at 1:30pm, to take part in case-based discussions and reflections.

## Key Partners



## Funders



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