

PRESS RELEASE:
Response to the End of Life Care Strategy - One Year On

NCPC welcomes a positive first year in implementing the End of Life Care Strategy as 'good work in progress'.

We consider that linking the Strategy to the implementation of the Darzi NHS Review has raised the profile and importance of end of life care. The issue is becoming mainstream but Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) must have plans for continued investment and quality improvement.

Our earlier NCPC Manifesto (January 2005) called for double the investment in palliative care and this became part of the Government's Manifesto. The £286million investment that is being given to PCTs and SHAs from April 2009 over 2 years to support the implementation of the End of Life Care Strategy reflects the Government's commitment.

NCPC intends to closely monitor this investment to ensure it is being used effectively to develop local services. SHAs and PCTs must be held to account for this essential investment and transparency is essential, especially in the current financial climate. The Public Accounts Committee and National Audit Office recently highlighted the variations and inequalities in end of life care in their hard-hitting reports and this is an opportunity for real progress and innovation across services.

NCPC is also delighted by the positive and energetic response that we have seen around the country to the launch of the new national coalition that we are leading to raise awareness on death, dying and bereavement.

Professor Mayur Lakhani, GP and Chair of NCPC, said:

"I welcome a positive first year in implementing the End of Life Care Strategy. I would urge local health economies to remain focussed to turn their plans into reality. Implementation is often the weakest link in the chain. As a practising GP, I know how important it is to improve access to and quality of palliative care for all patients who need it. We will continue to work with stakeholders to support improvement.

Measuring and improving quality including patient experience should be an early priority in the second year.

Raising public awareness and the profile of end of life care is essential for the success of the strategy and it will also be important to ensure that there is core training in end of life care for all health and social care staff."

ENDS

Notes for Editors

PALLIATIVE CARE FACTS

1. Most people have palliative care needs at the end of their life.
2. Cancer is the underlying cause in only 25% of all deaths, yet 95% of access to specialist palliative care services is by people with cancer.
3. Those dying from diseases other than cancer suffer gross inequalities in their access to specialist palliative care services.
4. 83% of all deaths are of people aged 65 and over yet only around 65% gain access to specialist palliative care services.
5. The current distribution of palliative care services is often random when compared with assessed needs of populations.
6. Patient preferences for place of care and death are not met for most people.

Reference: Submission of evidence to the House of Commons Health Committee, NCPC, 2004

ABOUT PALLIATIVE CARE

"Palliative care is the active holistic care of patients with advanced, progressive illness. Management of pain and other symptoms and provision of psychological, social and spiritual support is paramount. The goal of palliative care is the achievement of the best quality of life for patients and their families. Many aspects of palliative care are also applicable earlier in the course of the illness in conjunction with other treatments." (Source: NICE)

ABOUT NCPC

NCPC is the umbrella charity for all those who are involved in providing, commissioning and using palliative care and hospice services in England, Wales & Northern Ireland. NCPC promotes the extension and improvement of palliative and end of life care services for all people with life-threatening and life-limiting conditions, and promotes palliative care in health and social care settings across all sectors to government, national and local policy makers.

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