

BRIDGING THE GAP:

Rural palliative care support for dying at home

Evelien Spelten¹, Jenny Timmis², Simone Heald³, Hodi Beauliv³

1. La Trobe University, Rural Health School 2. Monash University, Rural Health Mildura 3. Sunraysia Community Health Services.

“It is not that I fear death, I fear it as little as to drink a cup of tea.”

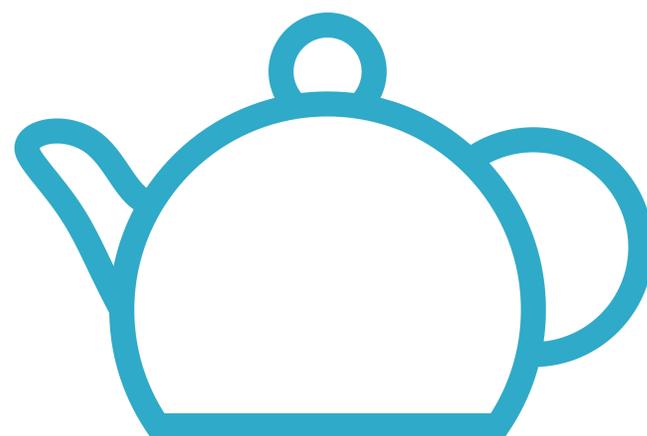
- Ned Kelly, 1854-1888, Bushranger

AIM AND RATIONALE

- Sunraysia Community Health Services (SCHS) in Mildura trialled an After Hours Palliative Care Service to facilitate dying at home.
- Four nurses worked a flexible 24/7 two-weekly roster scheme.
- The four Palliative Care nurses and twelve relatives were interviewed about their experiences.
- Rural areas lack end of life choice support.
- 70% of palliative patients want to die at home, only 14% do.
- Relatives feel unsupported.

RESULTS OF THE TRIAL

- All patients in the trial died at home.
- Relatives and staff are unanimously positive about the service.
- Relatives: a difficult but special time; could not have done it unsupported; positive impact on grief; would recommend the service.
- Staff: rewarding and challenging; regular debriefing needed.
- Good education and support largely negated the need for overnight call outs.
- Most call outs for death or unsettledness of the patient.
- Rostering relied heavily on flexibility of nurses and ‘banking’ of hours.
- Reduced burden on hospital and ambulance services.



CONCLUSIONS



- Continuation of After Hours Palliative Care bridges the gap.
- The service needs to be promoted.



- We have become unfamiliar and uncomfortable with death and the realities of dying.
- End-of-life-choice discussions should be initiated in the community.



- Rural workforce shortage also applies to Palliative Care.
- Risk of staff burn-out.
- No choice will increase demand on hospital system.



- Share protocols/ common understanding with hospital, GP, ambulance, community services.
- Educate to enhance continuity of care.
- Investigate and compare the economics of home based vs hospital based end of life care.

CONTACT DETAILS

Evelien Spelten e.spelten@latrobe.edu.au
Jenny Timmis jenny.timmis@monash.edu

REFERENCES

Legal and Social Issues Committee. (2016). Inquiry into end of life choices. Melbourne: Victorian Government Printer.
Sunraysia Community Health Services. (2016, March 15). End of Life: Your Way. After Hours Funding Grant 2016. Mildura, Victoria, Australia: Murray Primary Health Network.

DESIGN JULIA VAN VUUREN

