

## **DEVELOPMENT OF A CARER PACKAGE FOR SAFE ADMINISTRATION OF SUBCUTANEOUS MEDICATIONS ACROSS THE GRAMPIANS REGION**

One of the challenges in regional and rural areas is lack of access to health care professionals to assist in the administration of injectable medications in the home setting. Carers in the Grampians region are given verbal education about administration of medications by injection in the home. There is currently no visual learning package available in Victoria to assist with education and support of carers in the administration of injectable medications in the home setting. Due to limitation of after-hours services available across the region, if family have difficulty with subcutaneous administration of medication for symptom control, they may need to take the patient to the emergency department. It was hoped that an education package including a DVD may support carers when administering injectable medications in the home.

Therefore this study aimed to evaluate an interventional media package that had been developed to enhance carer confidence in the drawing-up and administration of injectable medications in the home.

This study was designed to examine the feasibility of a brief DVD intervention for carers in the home setting. The study occurred over three phases:

### **Results:**

27 carers consented over a three month period, 20 completed pre questionnaires and 16 completed post questionnaires.

Gender: 80% of participants were female.

Carers were asked how many injections were given:

- None: 12.5%
- 1-3 injections: 31%
- 4-7 injections: 12.5%
- More than 7 injections: 44%

Carers were asked to rate their disagreement or agreement to questions on a 1-7 Likert scale. Higher scores indicated higher satisfaction with the intervention, higher confidence, reduction in stress and improvement in skills.

All participants recorded a score of 4 or above on both pre and post questionnaires, demonstrating a positive outcome of the intervention. There was no significant difference between pre and post data from individuals relating to confidence, stress and improvement of skills. Variations occurred relating to the prompt card and medication log.

The prompt card was rated as extremely useful by 65% of participants on the pre questionnaire, but only 31% rated it as extremely useful on the post questionnaire. 57% of participants did not use the prompt card. The medication log was extremely useful for 80% of participants on the pre questionnaire, but only 31% rated it extremely useful on the post questionnaire. 57% did not use the medication log. The use of the DVD was consistent across all sites and 82-85% rated it extremely useful in pre and post questionnaires. One carer did not use the DVD and did not give any injections.

All carers felt the carer package had increased their confidence, reduced stress, and improved their skills. They felt the carer package was relevant to their needs and was a useful resource for injectable medications in the home setting.

### **Pre-questionnaire comments:**

- I have never had to inject any medications or care for someone before and feel this will give me clear knowledge and confidence to do so.
- Takes the guessing away. Allows family to take control. Allows family to be with our loved one.
- I know I will be nervous the first time I give the injections but I am confident I will follow the correct procedure because of the information pack.
- It will help relieve any anxiety I may have had in preparing and giving pain relief to my husband
- The DVD was put together very well - it was casual yet provided all relevant information. It is even useful for children to watch as it normalises the situation.
- Prompt card good for reminding about key points. DVD/USB much more detail and repetition very helpful.

### Post-questionnaire comments:

- It was amazing, it took a lot of stress out of the situation. Gave us control and the ability to manage my father's symptoms as they arose.
- A great benefit to me and my wife in her final hours. We were able to promptly give her medications. Resounding success. My wife didn't want to go back to the inpatient setting for palliative care because she had to wait for medication for pain - this enabled me to provide the care at home and my wife to die at home.
- It was well done. Very easy to understand step by step. If you forgot something you could look it up. English is my 2nd language (Italian 1st) but very easy to understand.
- Pack has been very useful. I never thought I would be capable of drawing up injections - now I am very confident and this package has helped me be more confident.

### Discussion:

Although this is not the first package to be developed for the palliative care market in Australia, it is the first to be trialed in Victorian metropolitan, regional and rural community palliative care services. Whilst the numbers recruited were small, the responses from carers demonstrated that the intervention assisted them in administration of medications and did not have a negative impact on carers.

### Conclusions:

This research clearly impacted on the wellbeing of carers who were caring for a person with a terminal illness. Carers commented that the package assisted in keeping a person at home, and reduced their stress and anxiety. Providing novel approaches to management of symptoms in the home setting may enhance carer confidence through the transition from hospital to home based care for terminal patients wanting to be cared for at home.

The package will continue to be available to all patients on a community palliative care program in the Grampians pending funding, and we would like to investigate whether there is a role for the package in acute services for families who wish to care for a person at home in the terminal phase, or a patient with a chronic illness who requires subcutaneous injections.

### References:

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**Regina Kendall**  
Nurse Practitioner



With best wishes for peace & joy at Christmas  
and a safe & Happy New Year,

Jade, Greg, Regina, Lawrence, Chi, Claire, Jenny & Bernadette

### CONTACTS

**Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team**  
Ph 5320 3553 Fax 5320 6493

**Gandarra Palliative Care Unit**  
Ph 5320 3895 Fax 5320 3763

**Ballarat Hospice Care Inc**  
Ph 5333 1118 Fax 5333 1119

**Grampians Region Palliative Care Consortium**  
Peter Marshall gpalcareconsort@gmail.com

**Central Grampians Palliative Care**  
Ph 5352 9328 Fax 5352 9425

**Wimmera Hospice Care**  
Ph 5381 9363 Fax 5381 9170

**Djerriwarrh Palliative Care**  
Ph 5367 2000 Fax 5367 9641

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