



Supporting Children at End of Life: The Many Benefits of Pediatric Palliative Care

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Abstract:

- **Background:** Terminally ill pediatric patients present a complex clinical challenge due to the multifactorial nature of their pain and suffering at end of life, in addition to the grief experienced by the family. Pediatric specific palliative care programs can help support families and patients cope with the progression of the disease by treating the patient's physical symptoms and also their emotional, spiritual, and psychosocial distress as they transition toward death.
- **Methods:** Research studies demonstrating the effects of palliative care on terminally ill pediatric patients and their families were identified using a systematic search of two databases. The articles were reviewed and assessed for statistical significance.
- **Results:** The literature search resulted in 98 articles, 8 of which were selected for inclusion in the final review. The results of the studies selected revealed that palliative care programs had statistically significant positive effects on the management of parental grief, patient symptoms such as dyspnea, anxiety and pain, and communication between the family and the care team. Study results also showed decreased health care costs, lower chances of a patient dying in the PICU, and reduced provider guilt when patients were referred to palliative care.
- **Conclusions:** Utilization of pediatric palliative care programs for terminally ill patients has multiple benefits and can increase the quality of life for the patient and the family. Continued research should be conducted to quantify advantages of these programs with the goal of increasing access and expanding the professional field of pediatric palliative care.

