

**Integration of Palliative Care Services in Home Healthcare: Findings from a Pilot Study Assessing Knowledge, Attitudes, and Confidence among U.S. Clinicians, Patients and Caregivers**

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**Introduction:** U.S. home healthcare (HHC) patients, who are often older and seriously ill, could benefit from palliative care (PC) services. However, only 7% of U.S. home-based PC programs are operated by HHC agencies. Successful PC integration into U.S. HHC practice depends upon workforce readiness to provide services and receptivity of patients and their caregivers.

**Objective:** To develop and test two questionnaires assessing U.S. HHC clinician readiness for and patient/caregiver receptiveness to PC (measured by knowledge, attitudes, and confidence).

**Methods:** We identified and adapted existing PC-related questionnaires. Items were created to cover all eight domains from the 2018 National Consensus Project (NCP) Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care. For content validity and understandability, we elicited expert feedback and conducted 20 cognitive interviews. The refined questionnaires consisted of three sections measuring knowledge, attitudes, and confidence with 56 items for patients/caregivers and 95 items for clinicians. Pilot testing was conducted with 30 clinicians and 28 patients/caregivers from a large, urban HHC agency. Descriptive statistics were calculated.

**Results:** Many patients/caregivers (48.4%) lacked any awareness of PC, while only 31.3% of caregivers had some knowledge. Knowledge gaps existed, especially for pain management/opioid use, spiritual/cultural aspects of PC, and end-of-life (EOL) decision-making. Attitudes regarding pain management/opioid use varied. Caregivers expressed less confidence in handling difficulty breathing, agitation, EOL discussions, and EOL care. Despite this, 93.6% of patients/caregivers would consider PC for themselves or their loved ones.

Clinicians, overall, demonstrated adequate knowledge. However, over 40% incorrectly answered questions about pain management/opioid use and ethical/legal aspects of PC. While clinicians generally had positive attitudes towards PC, their confidence levels regarding PC service provision varied.

**Conclusion:** Preliminary analyses revealed PC-related knowledge gaps among HHC clinicians, patients, and caregivers. Broader dissemination of our questionnaires would help identify training and educational needs, laying the groundwork for PC integration in HHC.