

Perceptions of Specialty Palliative Care and Its Role in Pediatric Stem Cell Transplant: A Multi-Disciplinary Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background Consultation of specialty palliative care remains uncommon in pediatric stem cell transplant (SCT) despite growing evidence that early integration of palliative care improves outcomes in patients with advanced cancers or undergoing SCT. Little is known about how multidisciplinary pediatric SCT teams perceive palliative care and its role in SCT. Procedure We conducted semi-structured interviews of members of a multi-disciplinary SCT team to understand their perceptions of palliative care, how specialty palliative care is integrated into SCT, and to identify barriers to increased integration. Eligible participants included physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, and child life specialists. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Results Four major themes were identified. First, SCT team members held a favorable perception of the palliative care team. Second, participants desired increased palliative care integration in SCT. Third, participants believed that the palliative care team had insufficient resources to care for the large number of SCT patients which led to the SCT team limiting palliative care consultation. And, finally, the lack of a standardized palliative care consultation process prevented greater integration of palliative care in SCT. Conclusions SCT team members held a favorable perception of palliative care and saw a role for greater palliative care integration throughout the SCT course. We identified modifiable barriers to greater palliative care integration. SCT teams who desire greater palliative care integration may adapt and implement an existing model of palliative care integration in order to improve standardization and increase integration of specialty palliative care in SCT.

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