How can we facilitate access to palliative care for people who are homeless?

A systematic review of qualitative research

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Homelessness - a growing international concern

- From 2010-2015: 55% increase in rough sleeping in London1
- 50% increase in people in hostels in New York2

Homelessness & Health

- In a UK survey of >2,500 homeless people3: 73% reported physical health problems
- 66% reported having, or recovering from a drug or alcohol problem
- 80% reported mental health issues

Aims of the review

- Qualitative synthesis of previous research to explore:
  - The views & experiences reported by homeless people, & those supporting them regarding palliative care
  - What are the challenges to palliative care access for this population?
  - How could we improve access to palliative care?

Eligibility & included studies

- Recruiting homeless people or staff
- Exploring palliative care, death or dying
- Qualitative analysis

Found: 8 studies, reported in 12 papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Homeless people 3, 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Health &amp; social care providers 1, 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Health &amp; social care providers 2, 48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Hostel/outreach staff 1, 48</td>
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Findings: Challenges to palliative care

1. Chaotic lifestyles associated with being homeless
2. Receiving or delivering palliative care in temporary accommodation settings
3. Restrictive mainstream health care systems and attitudes of staff

Examples of recommendations in practice

Groundswell1 - Peer advocates building relationships with homeless people to help them address their health needs

Pathway1 - dedicated teams of health & social care professionals in hospitals, working with other services to promote safe hospital discharges

The Ottawa Inner City Health Project1 - Hospice designed specifically for people who are homeless, also provides respite

St Mungo’s1 - palliative care coordinator for homeless people & end of life care resource pack for staff

Recommendations (based on this review)

1. Build trust and relationships between homeless people and services
2. Increase collaboration between services
3. Incorporate flexibility into services
4. Provide training and support for staff

Fostering relationships, increasing flexibility & access & promoting collaboration could help to improve care for homeless people at the end of their lives.

References

2. The State of Homelessness in America (2016) National Alliance to End Homelessness