Improving Last Stages of Life

The innovative project trained rural Wisconsin health care providers in palliative care.

**Description:** This project increased health care providers’ knowledge of palliative care to improve the last stages of life for rural Wisconsin patients and their loved ones. Changing the Culture of Palliative Care in Rural Wisconsin created an active network of palliative care and hospice service providers in rural Wisconsin communities.

**Results:** During the first project of its kind in the United States, the Hospice Organization of Palliative Experts (HOPE) of Wisconsin partnered with 12 hospice organizations in rural central and northern Wisconsin to reach underserved areas. The project trained 24 providers to use academic detailing (a method of focused one-to-one education) to promote palliative care and hospice as an option for patients and effectively communicate with patients and their families on sensitive topics. They in turn contacted nearly 150 health care providers in rural central and northern Wisconsin communities. Two-thirds of health care providers reported that detailing increased their knowledge of palliative care.

**Partnerships:** The academic partner traveled throughout the state, meeting with hospice service providers in Phillips, Medford, Wausau, Sheboygan Falls and Platteville. Findings were presented at HOPE of Wisconsin annual conferences, the Wisconsin Cancer Council annual summit and shared with the Hospice Organization of North and South Carolina. Findings were published in a report to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and in the Journal of Palliative Medicine.

**Next Steps:** HOPE of Wisconsin has ongoing contact with the physicians and other health care providers trained during the project and maintains a database to sustain the statewide network of palliative providers. Ten of the 12 sites reported plans to continue detailing as a strategy to enhance the knowledge and skills of their providers.

**CHANGING THE CULTURE OF PALLIATIVE CARE IN RURAL WISCONSIN**

**Grantee:** The Hospice Organization and Palliative Experts (HOPE) of Wisconsin

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**Award:** $372,407 over three years

Palliative care is specialized medical care focused on providing relief from pain and suffering with the goal of improving quality of life for patients and their families.