

Journal Watch (Palliative Care Programs)

Family evaluation of hospice care: Results from voluntary submission of data via website

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Abstract:

The Family Evaluation of Hospice Care (FEHC) survey is a 61-item questionnaire that surveys family members about care provided to the decedent by the hospice. Hospices submit their data to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), where results are tabulated. For the first two quarters of 2004, a total of 29,292 surveys were tabulated. On average, respondents rated their overall satisfaction with care as 47.1 on a 50-point composite scale of five measures of satisfaction. Opportunities for improvement were identified for attending to family needs for support (18.2% of those surveyed reported at least one unmet need), attending to family needs for communication (10-29%), and coordination of care (22.1%). Surrogate reporting of unmet needs for pain, dyspnea, or emotional support ranged from 4.3% to 9.8%. The FEHC is a useful tool for measuring hospice performance and identifies a number of opportunities for improvement.

Key Words: End of life, quality of care, Family Evaluation of Hospice Care Survey, family satisfaction

Comments:

Strengths/uniqueness:

This report of the development and implementation of a survey of hospice care was able to include a huge data base of 30,000 surveys.

Weakness:

There is ongoing uncertainty of when families should be asked to complete surveys such as this after the demise of a relative. In addition there is the uncertain bias of how generalizable the results are of those motivated and able to answer such online surveys, and how representative this is of a general population.

Relevance to Palliative Care:

This report does demonstrate that it is possible to develop ongoing quality of care surveys from family members.