LAST DAYS PROGRAM SUPPORTS REGIONAL AND RURAL NSW

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KEYWORDS

Death literacy

Regional and Rural

Community partnerships

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HammondCare's Last Days Program delivered 3-hour workshops in regional and rural communities in NSW to improve death literacy in these areas. The workshops focus on providing education about end-of-life care, advance care planning, and practical support for caregivers and families. From December 2023 to April 2024, 296 participants from 63 regional and rural areas attended the workshop. Post-workshop surveys from 111 attendees showed 96% increased confidence in supporting individuals with life-limiting illnesses, and over 90% would recommend the workshop. These results underscore the program's effectiveness in enhancing community understanding of palliative care and confidence in navigating death and dying.

INTRODUCTION

The Last Days Program, funded by HammondCare Foundation, is a community-focused workshop designed to educate and increase community members' awareness, knowledge and confidence about death and dying and provide practical tips and tools to care for and communicate with a person with a life-limiting illness. In addition, the program aims to strengthen death literacy, promote advance care planning, and increase community awareness of the benefits of palliative care for individuals, carers, and the wider community.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Last Days program reached 86 regional and rural locations across New South Wales, engaging 296 participants from December 2023 to April 2024, demonstrating effective outreach and community interest in palliative care education.
2. Over 90% of participants from the Last Days workshops would recommend them to others, indicating strong satisfaction and perceived value.
3. Following the workshops, 96% of participants reported increased confidence in supporting individuals with life-limiting illnesses, and nearly all reported greater awareness of resources and support services.

METHODOLOGY/ PROCESS

The Last Days Program is a 3-hour interactive workshop delivered in-person or online via Microsoft Teams. All participants are provided with a copy of the Last Days workbook. The

primary target participants are regional and rural NSW community members, specifically individuals with a life-limiting illness or those caring for a person with a life-limiting illness. The workshops are facilitated by a palliative care nurse. Following the workshop, participants are invited to complete a voluntary post-evaluation survey accessible via a QR code or via the survey link sent to the participant's registered email address.

The program established links with local communities and key stakeholders through communication with local primary health networks, local palliative care service providers, advocacy groups, volunteer services, members of parliament, and local media outlets.

RESULTS/ OUTCOMES

Between December 2023 to April 2024, 296 registered to attend the Last Days workshops from 86 regional and rural locations in NSW, including Central West NSW, Far West NSW, Southern NSW, Illawarra, Murrumbidgee, and Mid-North Coast regions. Eleven workshops were delivered in person, and nine workshops were delivered online. A total of 111 participants provided feedback as part of the post-workshop evaluation survey.

As a result of attending the workshop, a vast majority of participants (96%) reported increased confidence in supporting a person with a life-limiting illness and increased their understanding of what to expect when a person is approaching the end of life. Nearly all participants (98%) reported increased awareness of the resources and support services available for the person with the life-limiting illness and their family members, and 93% reported increased confidence to be the support person for family/carers/friends of a dying person.

Regarding awareness of physical symptoms during the last day of life, 96% of the participants reported increased awareness of physical symptoms as a result of attending the workshop, and 94% agreed to gain knowledge on non-pharmacological strategies to manage physical symptoms in the last days of life. Lastly, 96% of participants reported increased confidence to initiate advance care planning conversation.

CONCLUSION

The Last Days Program is an innovative initiative aimed at improving death literacy. The program increased awareness, confidence, and knowledge among participants of rural and remote communities empowering them to better support individuals with life-limiting illnesses and their families. The strong collaboration with local stakeholders and community partners indicated that such community-based approaches can play a vital role in improving palliative care services in underserved regions. The high recommendation rate and positive feedback underscore the program's value and its potential for broader implementation.