

Meaningful connections in dementia end of life care in long term care homes

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BACKGROUND

- Persons living with dementia are less likely to have access to palliative care than those suffering from cancer

RESEARCH TOPIC

- The purpose of this study is to examine and compare family and staff perspectives on end-of life (EOL) care for people with dementia, as well as their family caregivers, who live in long-term care (LTC) homes
- This study explored how EOL care is currently being provided to those with dementia, what facilitates the provision of care, and what challenges are experienced by staff and family caregivers

METHODOLOGY

- This qualitative study was conducted during the baseline timepoint of data collection for a larger, multi-site investigation of a program geared towards enhancing end-of-life care in LTC homes
- Multiple focus groups were conducted at each LTC home where the participants included relatives, residents, and LTC staff members

KEY FINDINGS

- Three themes emerged from the focus groups that were conducted: (1) the importance of knowing the resident, (2) they are all human beings, and (3) the long, slow decline and death in dementia
- Existing rituals for marking deaths in LTC homes may not fit the needs of an individual's dementia after the death of another resident

CONCLUSION

- This research highlighted the need to support staff in answering questions asked by residents' relatives in order to comfortably inform them about the trajectory of their family member's dementia and eventual death