

Caring Hearts: Partnering with Palliative Care to Advance Excellence in End-of-Life Care

Samantha Hayward, MSN, RN, CPHON; Susan See, MSN, RN, CPN; Holly Birkinshaw, MSN, RN, CPN, PCNS-BC;
Trisha Stockton, MSN, RN, CPN, CNRN, PHN, Lindsay Irwin, BSN, RN; Courtney Manson, BSN, RN

BACKGROUND

- Each year, approximately 45,000 pediatric patients die in the United States, highlighting the need for comprehensive end-of-life care.¹
- Delays in palliative care services are associated with increased physical, emotional, and spiritual distress for both patients and families.²
- Early palliative care interventions play a crucial role in facilitating shared decision-making and aligning care with patient and family goals.³
- The acute care multispecialty unit (MSU) was designated to care for non-oncology and non-intensive care pediatric patients requiring specialized end-of-life support.

PURPOSE

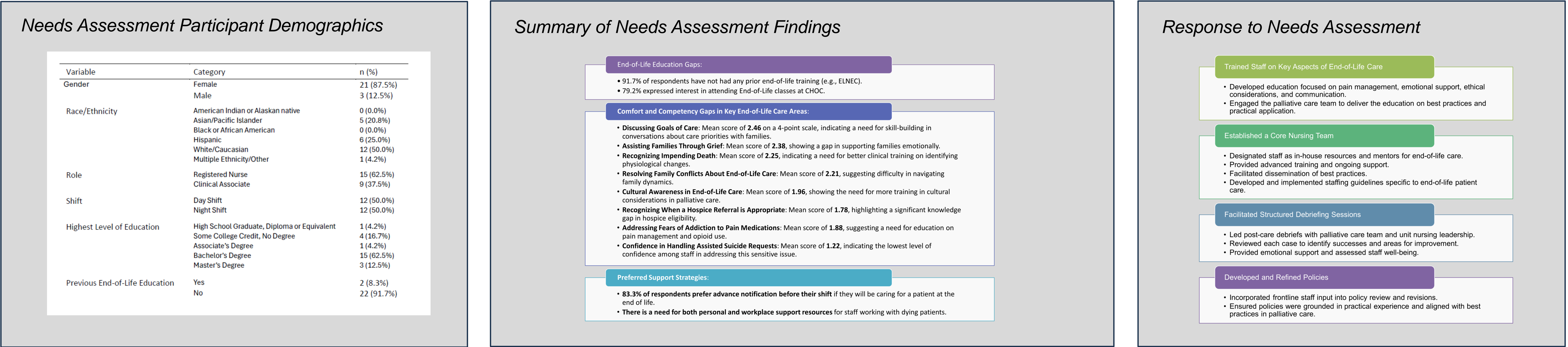
- To identify and address the educational needs of MSU staff to enhance their skills, knowledge, and confidence in delivering compassionate and comprehensive end-of-life care.

METHODS

- Multidisciplinary Approach
 - Integrated the expertise of the interdisciplinary palliative care team to support staff in delivering high-quality, patient- and family-centered care.
- Educational Needs Assessment
 - Utilized the End-of-Life Professional Caregiver Survey, developed by the National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care, to identify educational needs and guide curriculum development.

RESULTS

- 24 MSU associates completed the pre-education needs assessment survey.



- 6 MSU associates completed the same survey one year later to assess the impact of the educational intervention.
- Training led to notable improvements in goals of care conversations (+0.71), cultural awareness in end-of-life care (+0.54), and recognizing impending death (+0.25).
- Remaining challenges included limited knowledge of hospice referrals and services, low confidence in addressing assisted suicide requests, and low confidence in family conflict resolution and grief support.

CONCLUSIONS

- A critical gap in end-of-life training was identified, with 91.7% of nurses lacking prior education.
- Structured curriculum and expert-led training improved staff confidence, care delivery, and mentorship.
- Ongoing education, debriefing, and policy refinement are essential for sustaining palliative care excellence.

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Corresponding author: Samantha Hayward shayward@choc.org