

More than the last breath

McPherson, L.¹, Ward, A.², Miller, S.³ and Green, R.⁴

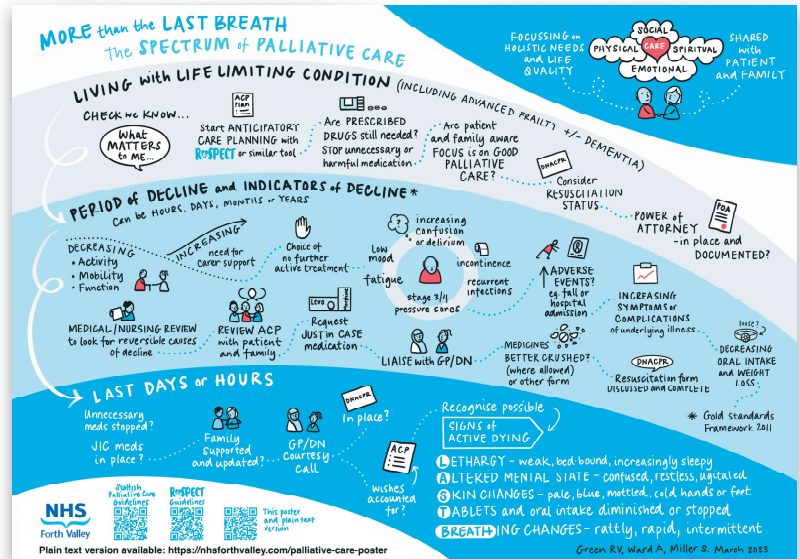
1. Macmillan Cancer and Palliative Care Facilitator, NHS Forth Valley.
2. Nurse Consultant Cancer and Palliative Care and Chair Research and Development Committee, NHS Forth Valley.
3. Consultant in Palliative Medicine, NHS Forth Valley and Strathcarron Hospice. Lead for Acute Palliative Care, NHS Forth Valley.
4. Macmillan GP/Lead GP for Cancer, Palliative Care and Long Term Conditions, NHS Forth Valley.

INTRODUCTION

This presentation provides an up-to-date overview of the MORE THAN THE LAST BREATH project which responds to feedback from community health and social care staff around the challenges they experience in supporting people faced with life limiting illness and caring for families involved. This approach encompasses supporting professionals to recognise palliative diagnoses, periods and indicators of decline and signs of active dying. It offers visual reminders and prompts around future care planning, 'what matters to me', holistic needs and use of an innovative acronym 'LAST BREATH' to support recognition of active dying.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS

A teaching poster has been developed to encompass the spectrum of palliative care and has been introduced alongside bespoke education sessions. The information is presented as visuals and text - pairing text with relevant images in educational materials can improve comprehension and recall.¹ Facilitated sessions offered resources, information and support to connect new learning with experience. Evaluation feedback is gathered around knowledge pre and post education sessions and feedback around the poster toolkit has been sought. To date, these sessions have been carried out within care homes, prisons and district nursing teams.



Teaching Poster available in both print and digital format

RESULTS

95% percent of participants self-rated “strongly agree” or “agree” that the visual aid increases confidence around decision making.

98% reported an increase in knowledge following the facilitated session.

Having this toolkit recognised by the Care Inspectorate would help managers to engage fully

This would be a great tool to use to guide our resident of the day discussion

I feel more confident to have conversations, we need something like this

If GP's are on board with this too, we will feel heard. We know our residents best

Health and social care staff have shown enthusiasm and created initial ideas in their areas in taking this forward.

District nursing colleagues found:

A guide for new staff induction and nursing students learning

Within the prison environment, colleagues demonstrated their interest to engage with the toolkit and suggested:

Accessing QR codes are not supported, we need internet links to resources

A clear consensus over every session in differing settings highlighted:

“Busy (poster), but all the information is required”.

Other suggestions from these sessions with care homes, prisons and district nursing teams highlighted that they would like to see a patient/family leaflet that would support conversations around the spectrum of palliative care and incorporate MORE THAN THE LAST BREATH.

“We would need to think about wording styles as many of our prisoners and families have poor literacy” - Prison colleague

“How do we support the bereavement care afterwards, as this continues when families return to the care home and we support them” - care home colleague

CONCLUSION

It is recognised that expanding MORE THAN THE LAST BREATH to capture all areas where palliative care is supported is key. Continuing to deliver MORE THAN THE LAST BREATH throughout all local care homes is ongoing and introducing this within community hospitals will be supported next. Extending this intervention over acute areas within the local NHS board supporting palliative and end of life care is also pivotal.

MORE THAN THE LAST BREATH is currently a focal point for medical education sessions which will make the vital step in sharing a toolkit that is understood and accepted over all disciplines in health and social care that contributes to clearer pathways around collaboration, joint decision making and increased confidence in supporting the spectrum of palliative care.

We look forward to being able to produce more findings and recommendations as MORE THAN THE LAST BREATH continues to be further embedded into the fundamental assessment, planning and delivery of palliative care within our local area and can be used to guide best practice and driving quality improvement in wider areas.