End-of-life care and care pathways in Victoria: a project to develop an integrated approach

Background
Within Victoria many services have or are introducing end-of-life care pathways (EOLCP) as quality assurance tools to aid and guide care at the end of life. Currently there is little empirical evidence of benefit or harm to patients who are cared for using EOLCP. However, this lack of empirical data has not limited the introduction of EOLCP across numerous settings both internationally and nationally.

This project developed an integrated approach for healthcare service providers interested in using EOLCP in Victoria, Australia. The project was overseen by the Victorian Palliative Care Clinical Network (PCCN) and aligns with the Victorian Government document Strengthening palliative care: Policy and strategic directions 2011–2015.1

The PCCN was established by the Victorian Department of Health in August 2010 and provides clinical leadership in implementing policy directions, service delivery frameworks and program initiatives. The PCCN’s focus is to ensure a statewide innovative approach to providing quality care. This project was funded by the Department of Health and undertaken by the Centre for Palliative Care, St Vincent’s Health and The University of Melbourne, Victoria for the PCCN.

Methods
The key methods used in the project included:
- a broad review of the literature surrounding care pathways and EOLCP including a search of the grey literature
- garnering and incorporating service provider opinion to present an accurate account of current practices
- consultation and review by an expert advisory panel
- developing practice recommendations and implementation strategies to accurately reflect all such evidence.

Figure 1: Flow chart for selecting articles to review

![Flow chart for selecting articles to review](image)

Figure 2: Phased implementation of pathways

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<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
<th>Phase 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Prepare</td>
<td>Implement</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Maintain</td>
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The project team developed resources to support services interested in implementing EOLCP such as education packages, governance documents and position descriptions. The project recommended establishing a coordinating program for implementing EOLCP in Victoria.

Implementation
The Victorian End-of-Life Care Pathways Coordinating program (VEC) was established in response to the project report. The program is funded by the Department of Health and led by the Centre for Palliative Care as a pilot program over an 18-month period.

The VEC will:
- act as the key contact point for activity related to adopting EOLCP across Victoria and provide a coordinated, centralised approach
- act on behalf of and in collaboration with Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool (UK) in relation to adopting and complying with Liverpool Care Pathway documentation in Victoria
- assist with planning, implementing and evaluating EOLCP across Victorian healthcare settings, including aged care
- coordinate the VEC Special Interest Group and establish a sector-wide communication strategy
- develop workshops to facilitate communication with services interested in implementing an EOLCP
- establish opportunities for clinicians implementing EOLCPs to share experiences
- promote benchmarking between services.

Outcomes/tools
- Victorian End-of-life care pathways coordinating program
- Registering a Victorian EOLCP has become a top priority
- Collaborating with Western Australian Department of Health in national work related to EOLCP activity
- Developing web-based resources mapping EOLCP activity in Victoria


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This document is also available in PDF format on the internet at: www.health.vic.gov.au/palliativecare/

Endnotes


About the program
End-of-life care pathways in Victoria report 2011
End-of-life care pathways in Victoria Special Interest Group
Project oversight committees, national and international contacts
Mapping of EOLCP activity in Victoria

Resources
Alfred Health training modules for medical professionals
The palliative approach toolkit – University of Queensland

Journal articles

Useful links
State and Interstate
National and International
Mapping of EOLCP activity in Victoria
Organisations and category, implementation stage
Liverpool V12
RAC EOLCP

Figure 3: EOLCP resources in Victoria

![EOLCP resources in Victoria](image)