Walsall Healthcare
NHS Trust

A hospital Palliative Care Team's perception of working during the Covid-19 pandemic

A qualitative inquiry

Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the hospital palliative care team's experience of working through the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus was to explore individual perceptions of their lived experiences, whilst gaining an understanding of the burden placed on the team during the pandemic.

Research question

The research question was: 'The hospital palliative care team perception of working during the Covid-19 pandemic'. The study objectives were identified as:

1. To explore the hospital palliative care teams' experiences of working through the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. To identify issues surrounding professional burnout amongst palliative care teams.
3. To examine what palliative teams can take from the analysis.

Methodology: IPA

An Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) theoretical framework was used for this primary qualitative study (Smith et al. 2012), alongside an interpretivist paradigm that examined individual contributions, to fully explore participant's subjective experiences (Alharahsheh, 2020).

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were the chosen method for data collection. Data collection within IPA involved using an open and inductive approach (Smith et al. 2012), for this reason, semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method to gather rich in-depth data (Magaldi, 2020).

Data analysis

The six-step thematic model by Smith et al. (2012) was used for data analysis with the purpose of developing individual themes, before creating a table of master themes across the whole group This process followed an inductive approach, which allowed conclusions to be drawn by observing the sample group (Azungah, 2018).

Results

The key themes that emerged from data analysis were as follows:

1. Feeling fearful
2. Moral distress
3. Feeling of uncertainty

Summary

This study provided evidence to support the increased levels of stress experienced by the hospital palliative care team from working through the covid pandemic (May, 2021) This study provided evidence that Covid-19 significantly added to emotional stress and risk of burnout for healthcare workers (Çelmeçe, 2020), particularly those in areas of high pressure with high levels of mortality (Magnavita, 2021). Analysis of the study results demonstrated evidence to support the link between the developed themes and stress levels, putting many specialties at risk of burnout (Lasalvia, 2021).

Implications and recommendations

The findings from this study highlighted some important implications for literature, policy and practice in line with the study aims and objectives. This study demonstrated how nationally, a consistent lack of clear communication did in fact contribute to higher levels of stress and a sense of diminished support during the Covid pandemic (Dubey, 2020). It was recognised that the global response to Covid identified necessary improvements across the NHS as a whole (Shah, 2021), requiring better engagement with front-line workers (Billings, 2021).

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