

RESEARCH BRIEF - e-Shift, an innovative home care model: Perceptions of Nurse Practitioners

What is the topic of this research?

In response to needs of older adults at the end-of-life and challenges in the recruitment and retention of healthcare providers in home care in the South West Community Care Access Centre, a new and innovative model of home care, eShift, has been developed. eShift links unregulated care providers (technicians) providing home care to a remotely-situated Directing Registered Nurse (DRN), through a smart phone application using real-time communication and documentation technology. The DRN monitors and directs appropriate, safe, and effective care provided in collaboration with the technician in real-time, enhancing quality of care delivery for older adults and their family caregivers.

How was the study done?

The study involved audio-recorded interviews and focus groups with decision-makers, technology provider, care coordinators, unregulated care providers (technicians), RNs (directing and visiting), allied health professionals, nurse practitioners, physicians and family caregivers. A total of 47 interviews were conducted to gain insight and understand the structure, process, outcomes and overall impact of the eShift model of palliative home care from the end-users in Ontario.

What did the researchers find?

Nurse practitioners providing home-based palliative care were interviewed (n= 4) early in the study and six months later. When commenting on those patients who receiving care through the eShift model, nurse practitioners described their patients as receiving consistent team-based care that the patient's condition was well monitored, and they had good symptom management. They also believed that patients were able to rest better knowing that their families were receiving some respite care. These findings are reflected in the following quotes:

“Once we got this team thing going with the nurses and RNs and PSWs [technicians] we don't get called very much.”

“When they're [patients] really ill...in the last few weeks they know that their family is sleeping. It seems to make a difference...I think they rest better.”

“I'm greatly relieved that somebody's taking good care of them [palliative patient]. I'm not going to go the next day and find there the symptoms it took me four days to get under control are out of control again or there's a crisis that nobody noticed was coming along.”

At the beginning of this study, nurse practitioners indicated to the researchers that they were not able to access patient information through the eShift portal. Nurse practitioners indicated that access to all patient information including patients receiving eShift would facilitate care. This information was conveyed to decision-makers by researchers during the study. Our later interviews with nurse practitioners suggest that they were beginning to access the eShift portal to review patient information.

Further Research?

A survey of the eShift healthcare team was conducted in early 2016. Findings from the survey will be available in early summer 2016. The researchers will be interviewing family caregivers and conducting an economic analysis in 2016-2017.

Who are the researchers?

A team of researchers are led by co-principal investigators:

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