

Book Review

Handbook of Palliative Care, 3rd Ed Edited by Christina Faull, Sharon de Caestecker, Alex Nicholson and Fraser Black. Published by John Wiley and Sons, 2012. Number of Pages 374. ISBN: 978-1-118-06559-4.

In this handbook, Faull, Caestecker, Nicholson, and Black have brought together specialists from the UK and Canada whom have put together an impressive body of work in the Handbook for Palliative Care. The authors state that their main aim is to provide knowledge that is informative and practical to support health care professionals in every setting and to provide medical professionals with evidence-based knowledge of how to treat those at the end of their lives.

The book has 24 chapters with topics covering a variety of diseases, providing care to different types of people, and other aspects such as spirituality, communication, and ethical issues. Most of the chapters provide evidence-based knowledge, outline practical approaches to end-of-life care, and provide further resources and details of organizations that may assist the provider, patients, and their families. Each chapter has the potential to advance the health care professionals knowledge of palliative care.

Chapter 1 discusses the context and principals of palliative care. This includes information on the importance of the general practitioner and primary care involvement in palliative care, as well as the principles and background of this domain of medicine. There is a discussion of palliative care issues around the world, such as the increasing age and the challenges that go along with this. There are easy to follow graphs, figures, and highlighted boxes that help the provider follow the end-of-life care pathway and identify patients with advanced illness. Chapter 2 builds on this background with a comprehensive overview of palliative care in the community. It takes a closer look at the role and the importance of the general practitioner, district nurses, community matrons, and case managers, as well as the effectiveness of the Gold Standards Framework.

Chapters 3 through 5 provide insight into the public's and patient's involvement in palliative care, choices, equality and diversity in care, and a comprehensive overview of ethical issues in this domain. Chapter 6 is a very informative chapter about communication and provides the reader with a framework for engaging in difficult discussions with patients. It addresses difficult topics such as dealing with 'collusion', denial, unrealistic expectations, and how to respond to questions about life expectancy. Notable is the chapters section on the importance of using a professional interpreter versus a

lay interpreter and gives structure for the actual seating arrangement when using an interpreter. Chapter 7 offers effective advice on how to deal with death, dying, and bereavement. One highlight is that it provides guidance on assessing and managing a family's bereavement needs.

Chapter 8 focuses on 'advance care planning', while Chapter 9 provides extensive background on the assessment and management of pain in the palliative care setting. This includes detailed information on the World Health Organization analgesic ladder, as well as a summary of different types of analgesics, adverse effects of medications, and highlights important and practical points for starting and titrating opioids. Further chapters are devoted to palliative care in the context of various diseases systems such as gastrointestinal, liver, pulmonary, kidney, neurological, and cardiac, as well as cancer, HIV/AIDS, and dementia.

Chapter 15 artfully addresses palliative care for children. It highlights the different life-limiting conditions that affect children and discusses the management of grief among family who lose a child. Difficult topics are addressed such as how to determine the right time to consider palliative care for a child and how to integrate palliative care with curative treatments. There is information on tools available to help assess pain in children and an effective tool to help aid parents in the management of a child's seizure. Other topics addressed include medication types and appropriate dosages for children in this setting. There is a section on how to advise parents to talk to their child about the illness and how to help families cope with a child's illness. Chapter 16 addresses the uniqueness of palliative care for adolescents and young adults. It highlights the challenges of providing palliative care to young people and explains what separates young people from both adults and children when it comes to managing a life-threatening illness. This section also provides important insight into psychology of the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Chapter 21 examines issues related to terminal care and dying, including helping people achieve the preferred place of death, as well as presenting an algorithm for the management of physical symptoms in the dying patient. Must read sections include the potential advantages and disadvantages of dying at home and other settings, as well as how to recognize the onset of dying and assess the needs of the terminally ill. Notable is an overview of the rituals around death for many religious and cultural groups, although this is primarily from a UK perspective. Highlighted sections discuss the suggested steps of resuscitation that are a useful reminder to all providers. The final chapters highlight complementary approaches to palliative care and the role of spirituality, with excellent

case examples provided throughout. Further insight is provided into how to integrate spirituality into end-of-life care, as well as how to enhance communication skills, listening, and responding as a spiritual provider.

For the medical professional who cares for people at the end of life, this book would be an excellent additional resource to add to their wealth of knowledge. It focuses on a variety of patients, illnesses, and settings, which different types of providers will find extremely useful. Each chapter includes practical evidence-based knowledge, highlighted points, tables, graphs, and algorithms that help the reader integrate the information. For those who are new to the

field of palliative care, or those with expertise in the field, this book will cultivate one's knowledge in the field and enlighten them.

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