Additional Skills for Social Workers Who Focus Primarily on Supporting People with Serious Illness

This Learning Pathway contains a comprehensive set of training and tools to help social workers who focus primarily on supporting people with serious illness address the unique needs of patients and families. Clinical topics include assessing patient needs and concerns, understanding patients' goals for care, addressing symptom burden, and helping patients to avoid crises and plan for the future.

Assess the Needs and Concerns of Patients

Introduction to Palliative Care
An introduction to palliative care, how it is delivered, its impact on quality of life, and the growing population of patients who need it.

Revised Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS-r)
Assesses for nine symptoms experienced by patients with serious illness and quantifies their severity. Alberta Health Services.

PHQ-4 Validated Screening Tool for Anxiety and Depression
Brief (4-question) screening tool for anxiety and depression.

Psychosocial Assessment for Patients with Serious Illness
Assessment questions to help nurses understand the impact of serious illness on a patient's relationships, social and spiritual supports, financial stability, and trust in the health care system. Fast Facts, April 2020

Social Needs Screen
Assessment tool and resource list to address social risk factors.

Zarit Burden Interview (ZBI-12)
Self-reported caregiver assessment.

CAPC Palliative Care Referral Criteria

Checklist of triggers for referral to a specialty palliative care team.

Strengthen the Clinician-Patient Relationship and Understand Care Goals

Discussing Serious News

Learn best practices for having patient-centered conversations about a serious illness diagnosis.

Discussing Prognosis With Patients and Caregivers

Learn how to effectively discuss prognosis with patients and their caregivers.

Clarifying Patient Goals of Care

Learn best practices for building trust, eliciting patient values, and having patient-centered conversations about goals of care.

Leading a Patient and Caregiver Meeting

Learn to effectively lead meetings that help patients and caregivers become aligned around the patient's goals.

Care Planning

Learn techniques to help patients and their caregivers plan for the future, both during the early stages of a serious illness and as a disease progresses.

Unconscious Bias: What It Is, How It Influences Health Care, and What You Can Do About It

Defines unconscious bias and how it influences patient care, and provides ways to reduce the impact of unconscious bias on care delivery.

Talking with Patients About Hospice

This resource lists step-wise tips to foster comfortable, productive dialogue for 'the hospice conversation'.

Manage Pain and Symptoms

Course 8: Problems with Opioid Prescribing: Is it an Opioid Use Disorder?

Learn how to identify and diagnose opioid use disorder (OUD) and practice communicating with patients about OUD and pain management.

Cognitive Assessment Tools

Recommended validated cognitive assessment tools.

Anxiety

After completing this course, learners will be equipped with evidence-based strategies to identify and treat anxiety in patients living with a serious illness.

Depression

After completing this course, learners will have the tools to accurately identify and treat depression in patients living with a serious illness.

Prevent Crises and Help Patients Plan Ahead

Supporting Patients with Serious Illness to Plan Ahead

Considerations for clinicians, patients, and families upon diagnosis, including advance care planning, personal care needs, legal and financial planning, work and retirement planning, and prevention of common medical risks.

Reducing Risks for Older Adults

This course provides context and best practices for identifying older adults at risk for poor outcomes, including falls, delirium, and caregiving challenges.

Supporting the Family Caregiver: The Burden of Serious Illness

Assessing and supporting caregivers of people with serious illness.

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