Social Work Serious Illness Designation: Foundational Skills

This Learning Pathway provides comprehensive online education in social work practices to improve quality of life for patients living with a serious illness. Social workers can use Social Work Serious Illness Designation to demonstrate expertise in working with this patient population.

Assess the Needs and Concerns of Patients

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

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

Advance Care Planning Conversations
How to initiate and conduct conversations about advance care planning.

Clarifying Goals of Care
Strategies for eliciting patient goals and preferences to inform treatment decisions.

Communication Phrases in Palliative Care
Phrases to use when talking to members/patients and their families about prognosis, advance care planning, and quality of life.

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 1: Comprehensive Pain Assessment
Conducting a comprehensive pain assessment to guide safe and effective treatment.

Cognitive Assessment Tools
Recommended validated cognitive assessment tools.

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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