Dimbleby Marie Curie Cancer Care Research Fund - Project Grant

Project details

Professor Sue Latter, University of Southampton

A phase I-II feasibility trial of Cancer Carer Medicines Management (CCMM): an educational intervention for carer management of pain medication in cancer patients at end of life.

Duration of project: 24 months
Start date: August 2012 (TBC)
Budget: £215,000(TBC)

Abstract

Pain in people with cancer at the end of life is common, and can cause considerable distress to both patients and family carers. Research into unpaid carers' needs for practical and nursing skills at the end of life highlights education to help them manage pain medicines is a top priority. Despite this, there has been a lack of research to develop and evaluate a theory-driven, evidence-based, nurse-led intervention for unpaid carers on pain medicines management. We will therefore focus on developing and testing the education and support needed by carers in this important area.

First, we will draw together the evidence across previous studies and make conclusions about what might work best – e.g. what information do carers most want, and in what form? We will then ask carers and health care professionals their views about this evidence and what else is important to them. We will use all this to design a prototype education and support package for carers on pain medicines. We will then ask 12 people with experience in pain medicines for cancer (including both unpaid carers and health professionals) to review this.

After revisions, we will test whether the package has the potential to improve carers' experiences of managing pain medicines. We also need to know at this stage whether the research will work: e.g. can we recruit enough carers? How will they feel about being involved in the education? We will address these aims using a feasibility trial. 12 nurses working with patients at end of life and their carers will be recruited: 6 nurses from one centre in Hampshire; and 6 nurses from GP practices in Cardiff. We will train 3 nurses at each site to put the education and support into practice. The other 3 nurses at each site will be our 'control' group. Each nurse will recruit 5 carers who will be asked to complete questionnaires to measure their experience in managing pain medicines, as well as their overall feelings. Carers will complete these on first meeting the nurse, and 1and 4 weeks after they receive the package (intervention group) or usual care (control group). A researcher will interview carers about their experiences at 1 and 4 weeks and will interview nurses on study completion. We will then analyse changes in carers' questionnaire scores and carers' and nurses' experiences to assess whether the education and the study might work on a larger scale.