

LEARNING - A TWO WAY RELATIONSHIP

In November 2011, Banksia Palliative Care Service staff travelled to Japan as a recipient of a second Australia Japanese Foundation (AJF) Grant, awarded by the Australian Government. The purpose of the AJF grant was to provide palliative education, discuss Australia's palliative care interdisciplinary team model and to explore opportunities to share experiences in relation to quality and risk.

Staff visited Japan for 3 weeks. A series of palliative care workshops and seminars were conducted in Tottori, Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya and Tokyo. The audiences were a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students, palliative care nurse specialists, aged care staff, doctors, allied health, pharmacists and members of the public.

There is an increasing interest in Japan on pain assessment that extends beyond physical assessment to include psychosocial assessment and client focused goals that are realistic and achievable. This was one of the main themes for many of the seminars Banksia conducted.

At the Osaka Nursing Association a forum was held on dementia, pain assessment and opportunities to improve family support. The audience was palliative care nurse specialists. The seminar was interactive with participants discussing current palliative care situations.

In Kobe, there was a similar workshop with meetings afterwards with academic staff to discuss opportunities to increase recruitment of nurses into the field of palliative care and the importance of growing and educating the palliative care workforce.

A highlight of the first weeks of the tour was an opportunity to meet with dignitaries from the Department of Public Health and Medical Affairs of the Osaka Prefectural Government. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange experiences of palliative care in both countries. The role of the nurse practitioner was of particular interest as this is currently under consideration in Japan. This visit was made possible due to our strong partnership with the Japanese Educational Clinical Cardiology Society (JECCS) in Osaka who we have partnered with for many years to extend palliative care training opportunities in Japan and at Banksia.

In Tokyo, Banksia staff spent a week at Pallium (Banksia's Sister Organisation). Pallium is a grass roots community palliative care service with strong community links and a volunteer program that is integral to their service. The visit focused on the exchange of palliative models of care, risk management and quality programs and home visits. Whilst working under very different models of care and health care funding requirements, the essence of palliative care nursing is similar in both countries. We were very fortunate to be able to witness the wonderful care that clients received from Pallium in the home situation.

Pallium hosted a public forum where Banksia presented on the interdisciplinary model of care in palliative care teams from the Australian context. The audience consisted of doctors, nurses, community workers and pharmacists. Questions at the forum were in the areas of leadership of interdisciplinary teams, managing conflict within the team, the role of the pharmacists and other team members. There was also the opportunity to explore the difficulties / challenges in providing community palliative care in Australia.

Whilst both countries have different cultural experiences and expectation it was evident that client centred practice was pivotal to both Pallium and Banksia models of care. There were many other similarities - for example: day hospice, strong volunteer base, bereavement program, palliative care nursing and palliative care physicians. Australia is fortunate to have access to interdisciplinary teams. This access is made easier with the current funding formulas for community palliative care. Japan at present is funded on a medical model and limits the opportunity for services such as Pallium to extend their interdisciplinary team.

Health promotion and community engagement seemed much stronger in parts of Japan compared to Australia. Holding forums for the general public on palliative care and death and dying is not uncommon. There are many community groups advocating open discussion on death and dying. It is not uncommon to have over 100

participants at these forums. It is also common practice to have combined health professional and general community participants at the same forum. This occurred for some of the forums that Banksia ran. This is an area that was of great interest for us, as strengthening community engagement is one of the strategic goals at Banksia.

Both countries seem to share similar challenges in relation to workforce, ageing population, increased percentage of clients living by themselves and promotion of palliative care being much more than death and dying.

In summary, at Banksia we feel privileged to have been chosen again to represent Australia as an AJF recipient. Supporting our colleagues in Japan is a fantastic opportunity for our service. The true value of these types of partnership is the two way relationship of learning.



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