

An Alberta Inventory for Palliative Care Continuing Education Courses for Nursing and Allied Health



October 7, 2021

Covenant Health is proud to continue our mission to seek out and respond to the palliative care needs of vulnerable populations. Following two decades of establishing an international reputation, Covenant Health launched the Palliative Institute in October 2012 with a strategic plan to “be leaders in robust palliative and end-of-life care and advocate for it to be an essential part of the health system.”

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Ethics: This project has been reviewed by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office (April 11, 2021) and has been deemed to be quality assurance/improvement work and therefore outside of its mandate.

Executive Summary

Overview and Purpose: Nurses and allied health care providers (HCPs) provide direct care to seriously ill patients with increasing intensity at end of life. Preparing nurses and allied HCPs for evidence-informed palliative practice is a priority. Evidence suggests that many HCPs are ill-prepared for the complexities of palliative care (1-4). Although resources exist to support palliative education for nurses and allied health care providers, levels of awareness and uptake of these resources among HCPs is unknown. A review of evidence suggests positive outcomes in HCPs' knowledge, confidence, attitudes and communication when these educational resources are used (5). Increased awareness and uptake require a dedicated knowledge translation strategy for implementing educational resources. As a first step, we aim to create an inventory of palliative care continuing education courses for nursing and allied HCPs that are currently offered in Alberta to inform an educational needs assessment survey and a mapping exercise.

Progress: We completed an environmental scan of continuing palliative care educational courses for nurses and allied HCPs in Alberta using Google (dated between March 1 and April 30, 2021), which was augmented by expert knowledge from zone administrative and educational leads. The following key words were used, including *palliative care education Alberta*, *palliative care education Canada*, and *palliative care courses in Canada*. Institutional websites of Alberta Health Services (AHS) and Covenant Health that operate internally were also searched for palliative care education, including AHS Insite, AHS MyLearningLink and Covenant Health CompassionateNet. The concept of formal learning (6) was used to identify and define courses as a type of formal learning that is organized, structured, and often takes place within the initial education and training system or workplace training arranged by the employer. We excluded continuing education courses targeting physicians, pediatric palliative care professionals, undergraduate and graduate students, volunteers and caregivers. Palliative care administrative leaders in Alberta's five geographic zones (North, Edmonton, Central, Calgary and South) identified educational and administrative staff in their respective jurisdictions to serve as key informants to understand their awareness of these courses.

A total of 31 educational courses were identified and compiled: 21 courses at the zone level, ten courses at the provincial level, **Tables 1 and 2**. Also identified were 25 national organizations offering various continuing palliative care education resources, **Table 3**.

Challenges: Despite an attempt to limit this inventory to formal learning resources, a lack of a standard taxonomy defining continuing education posed challenges. Several studies suggest educational objectives and outcome evaluation are essential components when identifying continuing education, whereas others suggest classification using delivery methods (7-11). A

lack of consensus on taxonomy was evident through a review of continuing education frameworks used by major Canadian educational and professional institutions (Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, College of Family Physicians of Canada, Canadian Medical Association, Office of Continuing Medical Education University of Calgary, 12-15).

The rapidly evolving nature of palliative care continuing education and the impact of COVID-19 posed additional challenges. The resulting environmental scan therefore only reflects courses available at a single point in time (2020/21).

Next steps: This inventory will be validated and augmented with additional descriptors arising from the course objectives, content and target audience. Objective criteria will be developed to classify these courses as targeting generalists or specialists and as introductory, intermediate or advanced level. A mapping exercise will then be applied to determine the extent to which these courses address interprofessional generalist and specialist competency frameworks.

Zone Educational Courses

Zone-specific courses are unique to one of the five geographical Alberta Health Services (AHS) zones. Delivery of zone-specific courses are either online or in person and vary in format, including workshops (n=16), lectures (n=2), modules (n=1) and webinars (n=2). Time commitment to complete these courses varies from one hour to a day. Online access to these courses includes the Internet (URL provided), My Learning Link (AHS Portal), Eventbrite, direct-through-e-mail access, and other electronic formats. Zone-specific courses are accessible without a fee.

Table 1: Zone Educational Courses (N=21 courses, including 20 from environmental scan and 1 from key informants)

#	Zone	Course Name	Course Format	Delivery	Time Commitment	URL (registration or description)
1	North	Palliative Care for Professional Health Care Employees (or Palliative 101)	Workshops	Online	1 day	MyLearningLink to register
2	Edmonton	Advanced Pain & Symptom Workshop	Workshops	In person (in the past)	1 day (7.5 hours)	Under review and not being offered at this time (as of July 16, 2021)
3	Edmonton	Communication	Workshops	In person (in the past)	N/A (on hold)	Under review and not being offered at this time (as of July 7, 2021)
4	Edmonton	Difficult Conversations	Workshops	In person (in the past)	N/A (on hold)	Under review and not being offered at this time (as of July 7, 2021)
5	Edmonton	Palliative/End of Life – General	Workshops	Online	0.5 day	N/A
6	Edmonton	End-of-Life Management	Lectures	N/A	1.5 hours	Under review and not being offered at this time (as of July 7, 2021)
7	Edmonton	Palliative Sedation	Workshops	Online	N/A	N/A
8	Central	Palliative 101	Workshops	In person	1 day	N/A
9	Central	Palliative Care Refresher and Dementia	Workshops	In person	1 day	N/A
10	Central	Expected Death in the Home and LTC	Lectures	Online	1 hour	N/A

Table 1 Continued: Zone Educational Courses (N=21 courses, including 20 from environmental scan and 1 from key informants).

11	Central	Palliative Care for Health Care Aides	Workshops	In person	1 day	N/A
12	Central	Death, Dying and Dementia	Workshops	N/A (on hold)	1 day	MyLearningLink to register
13	Central	Palliative Sedation in Facilities	Modules	N/A	N/A	N/A
14	Calgary	Advance Care Planning & Goals of Care	Workshops	Online	3 hours	MyLearningLink to register (AHS employees) Eventbrite (non-AHS employees)
15	Calgary	How to Care, What to Say: The experience of bereavement when working with individuals & families	Workshops	N/A	1 day	MyLearningLink to register (AHS employees) Manual registration via email (non-AHS employees)
16	Calgary	Palliative Care for Health Care Aides	Workshops	In person (in the past)	1 day (in the past)	Eventbrite to register with a password
17	Calgary	Navigating the Journey Towards Death 1	Workshops	In person (in the past)	1 day (in the past)	Eventbrite to register with a password
18	Calgary	Navigating the Journey Towards Death 2	Workshops	In person (in the past)	1 day (in the past)	Eventbrite to register with a password
19	Calgary	Palliative Care Orientation	Workshops	N/A	N/A	N/A
20	South	Basics of Palliative Care	Webinars	N/A	N/A	MyLearningLink to register
21	South	Virtual Learning Fair Skills Orientation Days (palliative care discussion is incorporated, identified by key informants from South Zone)	Webinars	Online	N/A	MyLearningLink to register

N/A: not available.

Provincial Educational Courses

Provincial courses offered by AHS and Covenant Health are supplemented with some courses being offered by colleges and academic institutions. All courses except one are delivered online and six are delivered via modules. Time commitment to complete the courses varies from less than 10 minutes to 30 hours. Online access to these resources include the Internet (URL provided), My Learning Link (AHS Portal), Continuing Care Connections (AHS Portal), CLiC (Covenant Learning Connection) and other electronic formats. Covenant Health and AHS courses are free to their staff, whereas courses from colleges and academic institutions require a fee ranging from \$249 to \$5585.

Table 2: Provincial Educational Courses (N=10 courses, including 7 from environmental scan and 3 from key informants)

#	Course Name	Course Format	Delivery	Time Commitment	URL (registration or description)
1	Palliative Care Education Modules, Covenant Health	Modules	Online	20 minutes each	CLiC to register
2	Care of the Imminently Dying Pathway, Covenant Health	Modules	Online	7 minutes	CLiC to register
3	Continuing Care Health Service Standards (CCHSS) Introduction to Palliative and End-of-Life Care	Modules	Online	60-90 minutes	Link to register on Continuing Care Connections MyLearningLink to register
4	Serious Illness Conversation Guide, Alberta Health Services & Covenant Health	Workshops	Online	4 hours	MyLearningLink to register
5	Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care Designation E-learning Modules, Alberta Health Services	Modules	Online	40 minutes (in the past)	Link to description Link to access MyLearningLink to register
6	Post-Diploma Certificate: Hospice Palliative Care (7 courses), MacEwan University	N/A	Blended	N/A	Link to description
7	Advanced Palliative Care for Health Care Aides, Bow Valley College – Calgary, AB	N/A	Online	30 hours	Link to description

Table 2 Continued: Provincial Educational Courses (N=10 courses, including 7 from environmental scan and 3 from key informants)

8	University of Calgary – Advanced Nursing Practice I and II Certificates – Palliative and End-of-Life Care (cohort-based, one-year, part-time program, identified by key informants from Calgary Zone)	Video-conferencing, webinars, and podcasts	Online	N/A	Link to application
9	Trauma-Informed Care Course (identified by key informants from Calgary Zone)	Modules	Online	N/A	Link to online modules
10	Oncology Practice Readiness Education Program (O-PREP) (identified by key informants from Calgary and South Zones)	Modules	Online	N/A	Link to description

*Several educational resources in the format of conference were also identified, including Mary O'Connor Palliative & Hospice Care Conference, Covenant Health Annual Palliative Education and Research Day, Doing Death Better: Palliative Care Conference - Grande Prairie, as well as other events offered by Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association (e.g. the Roadshow, Imagine Conference). N/A: not available.

National Educational Resources

25 national organizations that provide palliative care education have been identified, including several colleges that offer courses through palliative care certificate programs in Ontario, such as Seneca College, Conestoga College and Durham College. In addition to the environmental scan, key informants identified palliative educational resources from six organizations. This table includes training and/or certificate programs or courses, information toolkits and conferences. Descriptions of these resources are available online (URL provided).

Table 3: National Educational Resources (N=6 organizations)

Index	Organization Name	URL (registration or description)
1	Pallium Canada (e.g. LEAP CORE) Resources identified by key informants (N=11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 resources • Entire LEAP program • Free online models • LEAP CORE • LEAP LTC • LEAP EMS • LEAP EOL • LEAP HCA • LEAP Paramedic • LEAP Facilitator Training • LEAP Renal, Solid Organ Transplant 	Link to register
2	Canadian Virtual Hospice Resources identified by key informants (N=8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming Full Circle – Planning for your care • COVID-19 and Palliative Care • Kids Grief • Living My Culture • Methadone 4 Pain • My Grief • Mygriefftoolbox.ca • Resources for teens, young adults, Indigenous perspective (e.g. videos) 	Link to description

Table 3 Continued: National Educational Resources (N=6 organizations)

3	Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association Resources identified by key informants (N=8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference • Grief and Bereavement • Intermittent services • Learning Institute • Palliative Care for Health Care Aide • Speak Up Canada • The Roadshow • Webinars 	Link to description
4	Life & Death Matters Resources identified by key informants (N=1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcasts, webinars and resources 	Link to description
5	Victoria Hospice Society, Victoria, BC Resources identified by key informants (N=3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palliative Care Intensive Course • Online Palliative Performance Scale (PPS) Course • The days long course for physicians and nurse practitioners 	Link to register Intensive Course Link to register PPS Course
6	Canadian Nursing Association certification in Hospice Palliative Care Nursing (identified by key informants)	Link to description

* Key informants have also mentioned five palliative care educational resources offered internationally, including [Upaya Being w/ Dying](#), ADEC.org, [Hospice foundation of America](#), California State University's [Shiley Institute for Palliative Care](#) and [Newcastle University's MSc in Palliative Care](#).

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