

ABSTRACT

- Integration: A Palliative Approach to Care
- Public Health and Compassionate Communities

TITLE

COMMUNITY BURDEN OF GRIEF - 13 years of addressing multiple loss in Peterborough Ontario

THESIS

In post-industrial Peterborough there is a high incidence of cancer and other occupational disease deaths. It is the worst registered-file of occupational diseases in Canada (Dr. Noel Kerin, occupational health consultant's presentation to Peterborough Public Health Board, February 2005). Building a collective awareness in the Peterborough community is central to success where the community is depressed by a blanket of silence. Protection of the "good jobs" complicates the "lethal legacy" of the workplace environment (Toronto STAR series, investigative journalist Sara Mojtehedzadeh, December 2016) creating a paradox. Acknowledgement of this paradox must happen. It cannot be resolved; it simply must be held and respected. Breaking the silence through incremental steps is part of the process for a fair compensation review of workers and widows' claims. Families need both justice and closure and this drives the process. Advocacy and political activism are essential for hospice/palliative care and bereavement support in post-industrial Peterborough Ontario.

CONTENT

Integration of a palliative approach to this large project requires working as part of a team with members who may or may not understand basic principles of hospice/palliative care. The team can work effectively towards all the goals provided there is mutual respect and the ability to share the agenda. Essential to success is an understanding of public health and compassionate care of both the members of the steering committee and the various participants. It was determined that integrating public education, community building and political action in parallel had to happen - an innovative, multi-dimensional bereavement strategy.

INCREMENTAL STEPS

Incremental steps and parallel strategies are necessary to implement bereavement support in a community clothed in a blanket of denial that hovers over citizens, neighbourhoods, the medical community, and politicians. It addresses the community impact of multiple deaths from exposure to asbestos and many other chemicals used in the workplace.

Creating teams/committees of stakeholders with different skills is central to success. Participants will recognize that programs for a community need cross-disciplinary skills that no one person can provide - e.g. writing, media interviews, political presentations, even a sympathetic filmmaker.

This poster demonstrates that a skill-set beyond basic hospice/palliative care skill training is needed to implement a bereavement strategy for a community in denial. The success and benefit of such a program cannot be separated from actions required to bring awareness, justice and closure for workers who die including their widows, sons, daughters, grandchildren and friends – a community with multiple losses.

In recent history, Remembrance Day services and memorials followed by the HIV/AIDS community events and Celebrations of Life have led the way. The Peterborough coalition of citizens, workers and their families provides a response model for a complex community.

OUTCOMES

1. Learn about a multi-faceted project that integrates a palliative approach to ensure a positive outcome for a community
2. Appreciate the perseverance required to successfully implement a unique bereavement program
3. Acknowledge the various skills that together achieve a common goal
4. Recognize the importance of empowering clients/participants to take action through developing their self-confidence and offering skill training

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