



Tools to help you learn about palliative care

By **Susan Gravier**
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Having access to, and understanding, the right information and evidence can help physiotherapists inform their practice and support their clients, writes Susan Gravier.

Palliative care provides a support system for people living with a life-limiting condition to live as actively as possible for as long as possible. It is active and supportive care that seeks to maximise quality of life.

Evidence shows that physiotherapy in palliative care can reduce pain, fatigue and dyspnoea, and improve mobility and physical function. Improvements in physical symptoms and function are associated with improvements in depression, anxiety and mood, wellbeing and quality of life (Olsson Moller et al 2018, Putt et al 2017).

Physiotherapists specialising in palliative care work across several clinical areas including cancer, neurology, cardiorespiratory, rehabilitation, renal and aged care, yet palliative care is not always a specialised role for physiotherapists.

The growing demand for palliative care means the need for all health professionals to make palliative care their business has become critical. Increasingly, physiotherapists are supporting clients with life-limiting conditions or older people approaching their natural end of life (with or without chronic conditions).

In palliative care, there are many important individual, personal, professional decisions and choices to be made. It is therefore important that everyone can access, understand and use reliable and relevant information to help them make these sometimes difficult choices and decisions.

CareSearch and palliAGED pull together and consolidate evidence-based information and resources into accessible language and formats. Both online resources are funded by the federal government. CareSearch provides evidence-based palliative care information across the lifespan and across the health system, while palliAGED provides that information for the aged care sector. In each, the perspectives of healthcare professionals, and of patients, carers and their families, are considered, and the materials are tailored to meet these needs.

To support physiotherapists working in any setting looking after a person with palliative care needs, the 'allied health' section offers information, tools and resources. For those who are new to CareSearch, the homepage for the allied health section offers a new navigation feature that links to introductory pages. These pages have been selected to help users understand important aspects of palliative care and build confidence in using evidence to inform and improve practice.

Although physiotherapists are familiar with evidence and evidence-based practice through their training and continuing professional development, keeping up-to-date can be time consuming. CareSearch provides the tools to help you find and use evidence. This includes PubMed searches on a multitude of topics and sections dedicated to searching for evidence and using evidence in practice.

Providing advice or education to a client, their family or carers can enable them to adjust and adapt to consequences of the illness. Education and counselling are therefore an integral part of palliative care. CareSearch and palliAGED host trustworthy information and resources for physiotherapists to offer to people in their care.

CareSearch also hosts a research studies register—Australian research projects and studies in palliative care. This database can be searched for current palliative care research activities, and those involved in research can add their study details to the register. Project completion or publication of the research findings are not requirements for inclusion in this database. PalliAGED has also identified and published current gaps in the evidence which may stimulate ideas for research in an area of need.

Showcasing allied health clinical stories and viewpoints, Palliative Perspectives presents blogs on various topics written by allied health contributors. You may wish to start by reading 'lifting weights and spirits'.

CareSearch welcomes written pieces from physiotherapists about interesting case studies, presentations or opinion pieces that highlight physiotherapy approaches to care at the end of life. CareSearch is also interested in hearing of research conducted by physiotherapists in palliative care. For contributions of stories from the field or research projects or presentations, contact the author at susan.gravier@flinders.edu.au (<mailto:susan.gravier@flinders.edu.au>).

Access CareSearch (<https://www.caresearch.com.au/caresearch/tabid/80/Default.aspx>) at and palliAGED (<https://www.palliaged.com.au/>). For a list of references email inmotion@australian.physio (<mailto:inmotion@australian.physio>).

Susan Gravier trained as a physiotherapist in Adelaide and worked in regional Victoria, Canada and Hong Kong. Having worked on healthy ageing and active ageing projects for many years, she is now a researcher in palliative care. In 2016–2017, Susan coordinated the production of palliAGED, writing many of the topic pages in the Evidence and Practice Centres. Susan is leading the allied health component of the CareSearch and palliAGED Engagement Project. (<https://www.caresearch.com.au/CareSearch/tabid/4884/Default.aspx>)

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