

Personal Support Worker Community of Practice Series

Post Mortem Care and Behind Closed Doors: What happens at the Funeral Home?

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Date: April 19, 2022



The Palliative Care ECHO Project

The Palliative Care ECHO Project is a 5-year national initiative to cultivate communities of practice and establish continuous professional development among health care providers across Canada who care for patients with life-limiting illness.

Stay connected: www.echopalliative.com

Thank you!

The Palliative Care ECHO Project is supported by a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.



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Welcome and Reminders

- Please introduce yourselves in the chat!
- Your microphones are muted for background noise, but we do want dynamic sharing, so please raise your hand to unmute to talk. Sharing or asking questions in the chat is also welcome.
- This session is being recorded and will be emailed to registrants within the next week.
- Remember not to disclose any Personal Health Information (PHI) during the session
- Terminology (Personal Support Worker)

Series Objectives

Our PSW Palliative Care Community of Practice

- **PSWs with a passion to become PSW experts in palliative care**
- A place for Peer-to-Peer practice support
- Facilitated and coached by palliative care experts
- Shared skill building in the Palliative Approach to Care
 - We engage in topic-based discussions, share knowledge and experiences to learn from each other, used cases to practice applying our skill caring for individuals/ families living with life-limiting illness
 - We share resources, tools, best-practice approaches
- Build on foundational knowledge acquired through LEAP PSW

Overview of Topics

Session #	Session Title	Date/ Time
Session 1	Introductory Session	Nov 16 th , 2021 from 5-6pm
Session 2	Essential Communication Skills Part 1	Nov. 30 th , 2021 from 5-6pm ET
Session 3	Essential Communication Skills Part 2	Dec. 14 th , 2021 from 5-6pm ET
Session 4	Tools Practicum Part 1	Jan. 11 th , 2022 from 5-6pm
Session 5	Tools Practicum Part 2	Jan. 25 th , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 6	Pain and Shortness of Breath Management	Feb. 8 th , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 7	The PSWs Role in the Last Days and Hours	Mar. 8 th , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 8	End of Life Medications and Side Effects	Mar. 22 nd , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 9	End of Life Delirium	Apr. 5 th , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 10	Post-mortem Care: Cultural Considerations and what happens at the funeral Home	Apr. 19 th , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 11	Culturally Relevant Care	May 3 rd , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 12	Trauma Informed Care and Cultural Safety	May 17 th , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 13	Indigenous End of Life Care	May 31 st , 2022 from 5-6pm ET
Session 14	Understanding Tubes, Pumps, Bags and Lines	Jun. 14 th , 2022 from 5-6pm ET

Caring for the body after death:
What is your role as a PSW?



After Death - What to expect

When an individual dies:

- the eyes may not stay closed as we need working muscles for the eyes to stay shut
- rigor mortis sets in at about 3 or 4 hours after death, chemical changes and lack of movement cause the body to stiffen, therefore care of the body after death is easier if done earlier, however there can be cultural considerations
- a form of digestion (autolysis or self-digestion) continues after death so it is not uncommon for gases, (flatulence or burping) to occur when preparing the body
- exhalation or a “breath out” may also be heard when preparing the body as final air leaves the lungs

Who Pronounces and Who Certifies death?

Pronouncing Death

a person deceased can be performed by a **Physician (MD or Coroner); NP (RN-EC); RN; RPN/LPN**

Nurses pronounce death in expected death and are given the authority to do so based on their College of Nurses and supported by the policies of where they work (hospitals, LTC homes, local home and community care programs)

Certifying Death

a **medical Certificate of Death** (Form 16) is to be completed by a Physician, an RN - Extended Class* (Nurse Practitioner), or a Coroner.

The Vital Statistics Act requires that **the original Medical Certificate of Death** is provided to the funeral service provider, who then brings that completed original certificate to the local municipal registry office in order to obtain a burial permit.

Until this paperwork is completed, the funeral home cannot proceed with further arrangements requested by the family.

Caring for the body after death: PSW Role

Let's put it into the chat!!!



Caring for the body after death

- position the body laying flat with a pillow behind their head
- close the eyes - note they may not stay closed
- wash the face, hands and body if the individual was incontinent or sweating prior to death
- Put the dentures in (if possible) or send with the body to the funeral home
- put a brief or incontinent pad under the individual - sometimes there is further incontinence after death
- dress the person in a clean gown/clothing
- change any soiled bedding
- Follow the family's wishes with respect to removal of jewelry

Practice Pearl:

prepare the body respectfully as if the family were present



Caring for the body after death cultural considerations

- Some cultures do not allow non family members to care for the deceased
- Some cultures do not allow males to care for the deceased
- Some cultures only same-sex people may care for the deceased
- Some traditions require covering of the face and others find this offensive
- **There may be**
 - specific prayers offered/required
 - specific amulets, rosary beads, other religious or traditional emblems used
 - specific rituals required such as elders performing cleansing ceremonies/drumming, monks chanting, specific bathing rituals with oils/perfumes, coins or specific plant leaves placed in the mouth, portions of the head shaved, dressed in specific ways or the body positioned in specific ways and others
 - specific time allotted that the burial must take place, e.g. before sundown

Behind Closed Doors: What Happens At the Funeral Home?

Funeral Homes:

*The final caretakers
of the deceased individual*



*“When words
are inadequate,
we need
ceremony”*

~ Dr Alan Wolfelt ~

https://youtu.be/flt_SAhBc00

*“How loss impacts our hearts, impacts
our heads...Ceremony takes the grief that’s
within us and finds ways to take it
outward.”*

*“Funerals are gatherings that help us
know what to do when we don’t know what
to do.”*

*“Funerals help us to acknowledge a new
reality and shift from presence, to
memory.”*

Quotes from Dr. Alan Wolfelt, Founder and Director of The Center
for Loss and Life Transition in Colorado

What happens to the body at the funeral home?

- From the place of death, (hospital, home setting, LTC home) the funeral home staff will attend to transport the deceased person to the funeral home.
- Upon arrival at the funeral home, the deceased person's name and date of birth are entered into the computer system (much like an admission to a hospital) and a number is assigned to the person's file. An identification bracelet (or anklet) are placed on the deceased person with this unique identifier. This identification stays with the deceased throughout their time with the funeral home.
- The deceased loved one is then placed in the funeral home walk-in cooler covered with a sheet until such time as the funeral arrangements have been decided upon.
- Those who are entrusted into the care of the funeral home are treated with dignity and respect - they are someone's much loved parent, child, son or daughter.
- Professionalism and Ethics are the cornerstone of the funeral industry.

What is Embalming?

- Embalming is done to help preserve the body for funeral services and viewing
- Embalming is optional.
- Embalming is the process of removing the blood from the body and replacing it with a formaldehyde-based fluid (using the carotid artery and the jugular vein - a tiny incision is made on either side of the lower neck)
- An embalming pump pushes the blood out of the body and replaces it with preservative fluid. The tiny incisions are sutured closed after this is completed.

Cultural Considerations of Embalming

- Embalming is prohibited or discouraged in some cultures including Muslim and Jewish faiths



What is Cremation?

- Cremation is a dignified way to reduce a body to its basic elements (bone fragments)
- Commonly called “ashes” (from the French word “cendres”)
- The deceased person is placed in a cremation container (a box made of combustible material or a casket) and placed into a cremator (called a retort)
- Cremation temperature is between 1,400 to 1,800 degrees F. The process takes 2-2 1/2 hours to complete



- The remaining bone fragments are mechanically reduced and weigh about 4 to 6 pounds
- The remains are placed in a temporary container that holds a metal disk with the unique identification number

Cultural Considerations of Cremation

Not Permitted

- Muslim
- Jewish

Permitted or Accepted

Accepted

- Catholic
- Protestant

Preferred/Permitted

- Buddhist
- Hindu within 24 hours

Water cremation (Alkaline Hydrolysis)

Alkaline hydrolysis (water cremation) or aquamation:

- A chemical process that uses a heated solution of water and potassium hydroxide or sodium hydroxide under pressure and agitation to reduce a body to components of liquid and bone. The resulting bone fragments are dried and reduced to a substance that looks like cremated “ashes”



- Considered to be a more environmentally friendly alternative to traditional cremation.
- Uses about ¼ of the energy of flame-based cremation and emits no direct greenhouse gases
- (Traditional flame-based cremation uses the equivalent of two tanks of gasoline for an average sport utility vehicle)
- The choice for cremation over traditional burials in Canada has increased from 51% in 2003 to 73% in 2020
- *There has been significant increase due to Covid 19

Burials

Traditional Burials and Green Burials

- Burial refers to the act of interring the deceased in a cemetery
- Traditional burial usually follows a ceremony where the casket is placed into the grave inside a concrete liner or vault
- Green burials refers to the return of the body to the earth with as minimal an impact on the environment as possible
- The body is not embalmed, placed in a natural biodegradable casket or shroud, no vault or concrete liner and the site is left to its natural state (no landscaping)

Cultural Considerations

Cultural Considerations of Burials

Burials are impacted by many factors including:

- Cultural beliefs
- Religious beliefs
- Personal beliefs
- Traditions
- Generational differences

www.greenburialcanada.ca

Located in Guelph, Waterloo, Pickering, Kitchener, Niagara Falls, some areas of BC, others?

Viewings

- A viewing is an unstructured gathering of friends and family where visitors can pay their respects to the deceased person and the family. The viewing (or visitation) is usually a less formal event than the funeral service
- Viewings take place before the funeral service
- Viewings may take place the day before the funeral or on the same day as the funeral
- Viewings allow the mourners the opportunity to share their grief and show support to the family and friends of the deceased



PSW Role: Attendance at Funerals/Wakes/Memorials

Poll Question: Number 1

Have you gone to a Memorial, wake or funeral for a individual who has been under your care?

a. Yes

a. No

Should a PSW go to a Funeral, Wake or Memorial?

Thoughts to consider

- Did the family or care partners invite you?
- Will you take a leave of absence or vacation day to attend?
- If you miss work for this will other individuals under your care not receive care
- If you attend on your own volition, what do you think the family will think?
- Have you considered that there could be cultural or religious reasons why you should not attend?



Trends

- Cremation is rising as the preferred choice
 - Direct cremation, Covid restrictions have had an impact on what people are choosing for honoring the life of their loved ones. Restrictions on the number of attendees has been limited due to the need for physical distancing. Masking has had an impact on how we interpret emotions
- Environmental footprints
 - People are much more invested in reducing their carbon footprint and their contribution to doing their part to help the environment
 - Generational shift in thinking
- Family-led services, celebration of life and funeral parties are common
- Themed funerals
 - Personalized to the loved one in a unique way (motorcycle procession for a motorcycle enthusiast)
- Technology (particularly since covid 19) includes:
 - Zoom, live streaming services to include those who cannot attend)
 - Barcodes on grave markers (directs you to a website to read the life story of the person whom has died)
 - Crowdfunding (GoFundMe) sources to assist families with costs associated with funerals

Personalized services

Remembering the individual



Wrap Up



Wrap Up

- Please fill out our feedback survey! A link has been shared in the chat
- A recording of this session will be emailed to you within the next week
- Make sure you have the next session marked in your calendar!
 - Culturally Relevant Care with a special guest speaker!
 - May 3rd, 2022 from 5-6pm ET

LEAP Personal Support Worker



- LEAP Personal Support Worker is an online, self-learning course that provides personal support workers and care aides with the essential competencies to provide a palliative care approach
- Register at: <https://www.pallium.ca/course/leap-personal-support-worker/?enroll=enroll>

"I feel this course was great, and straight forward. It was easy to navigate, and had very good information, and knowledge"

"A great course, lots of information just for the PSW role. Information very informative and easily learned."

"This course is really amazing, well made and really helped me understand palliative care"

"I feel this course was absolutely fantastic! I enjoyed it very much."

"Wonderful journey, thank you"



Thank You
See you on May 3rd!



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