



Palliative care services: meeting the needs of patients

There is increasing recognition that the principles of palliative care medicine can be implemented beneficially across most of the NHS and within most specialties. This report therefore reflects the shift in practice from predominantly cancer care to a much broader application. It includes recommendations on disseminating best practice both for those with terminal illness and for those with incurable illness earlier in the disease trajectory. Looking to the future, there is specific consideration of changing demographics, the importance of interdisciplinary care, the dissemination of care pathways, and new funding models.

Palliative care deals with an area of modern medicine that raises many ethical dilemmas, both in respect of treatment decisions and the formidable obstacles in undertaking research. For although palliative care is generally considered a 'good thing', it should be subject to rigorous scrutiny and justification of both process and fundamental precepts.

The report is both philosophical and practical and will be relevant to all doctors and allied healthcare professionals who wish to ensure that the needs of patients and their carers are properly met. It is essential reading for healthcare planners, commissioners of palliative care services, and for providers of undergraduate and postgraduate education for all doctors. As end-of-life care may affect us all at some time, this report deserves a wide readership and detailed consideration of its comprehensive recommendations.

Report of a Working Party

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