



# Exploring the End-of-Life Care and Bereavement Needs of Family Members in Long-Term Care Homes

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## CONTEXT

- Although long-term care (LTC) homes are the setting where end-of-life (EOL) care occurs for many older adults, the development of palliative care programs and approaches in these environments are still underway
- A key component of palliative care provision is supporting family members during their loved one's illness and EOL care experience, which includes bereavement care

## METHODS

- As a part of a larger participatory action research project, this study explored the EOL care and bereavement needs of family members whose loved ones had recently died in an LTC home
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 bereaved family members, including spouses and adult children, across four Canadian LTC homes
- Participants were asked about their interactions with staff about their loved one's EOL care, resources to support their bereavement needs, and recommendations to support the needs of others in LTC
- A thematic content analysis approach was used to analyze interview transcripts in order to determine key themes related to family members' EOL care and bereavement needs

## KEY RESULTS

- Three key themes were established: (1) the LTC home's responsiveness to the residents' and family members' EOL care experience, (2) current and suggested resources to support their needs, and (3) specific support needs around ongoing follow-up care
- Bereaved family members perceived staff's responsiveness through caring actions directed towards the resident and family (e.g. being compassionate, good communication) and attending to comfort (e.g. providing the family unit with space)
- However, some family members identified that the current EOL care information resources for planning and providing comfort were perceived as an area for improvement and, for this, staff could be more responsive by providing more social communication support

## CONCLUSIONS

- Although the experiences of bereaved family members can inform a general approach and creation of informational resources, individualized assessment is still needed as bereavement support is unique to each resident and their family

### Reference:

Wickson-Griffiths, A. & Holtslander, L. (2017, October). Exploring the End-of-Life Care and Bereavement Needs of Family Members in Long-Term Care Homes. Presented at the 46th Annual Scientific and Educational Meeting: Canadian Association on Gerontology, Winnipeg, MB, Canada.