Innovative End-of-Life Care: Unique Perspectives on Confronting Death and Living a Meaningful Life in Prison

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Abstract

A growing number of correctional facilities offer inmate-facilitated hospice care programs (IFHP) in order to meet the needs of end-of-life care in the correctional setting. The Center for Hospice and Palliative Care (Erie County, New York) along with a maximum-security state correctional facility in New York have successfully collaborated on an IFHP since 2010. This is a limited work on this topic and so in-depth analyses have explored the lived-experience of incarcerated inmates. Twenty-two semi-structured interviews with inmate caregivers were conducted. Interviews were transcribed, deidentified and analyzed using Consolidated Qualitative Research methodology. Analyses showed five domains emerged from the data: Connecting with Others, Confronting Death and Dying, Motivation, Program Description, and Personal Growth and Transformation. The present study suggests that participating in an IFHP may contribute more than just an innovative solution to providing end of life care for inmates, but also the potential for rehabilitative impact on the inmate-caregivers and their families.

Introduction

• Inmates 65+ have grown 94 times faster than all other incarcerated populations between 2007-2015
• A rising number of correctional facilities use inmate-facilitated hospice care programs (IFHP) in order to meet the demand and mandates for end-of-life care in the correctional setting
• As of 2011 there are only 69 known inmate-facilitated hospice programs in the country
• The Center for Hospice and Palliative Care (Erie County, New York) along with a maximum-security state correctional facility in New York have successfully collaborated on an IFHP since 2010
• A select few of inmates are trained in hospice philosophy/care, practical care assistance, existential/spiritual issues, companionship & supportive presence
• There is limited research on this topic and no in-depth analyses have explored the lived-experience of inmate caregivers.

Aims/Purpose

1) Explore inmate attitudes, perspectives, and motivations for participation in IFHP
2) Capture the phenomenological perspective of inmates participating in the program with regard to meaning/purpose in life, attitudes on death & dying, & perceived program impact.
3) Highlight and review a unique IFHP model.

Method

Participants
• Male caregivers incarcerated at a maximum state correctional facility in Western New York
• Demographic information not collected in order to maintain anonymity

Procedure
• 22 Semi-structured interviews, audio recorded, transcribed, & deidentified
• Analyzed using Consensual Qualitative Research Methodology

Frequency/Prevalence Codes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Typical</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Description</td>
<td>Contains data from all cases</td>
<td>Current Project: 22/21 cases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data ranging from 9/5 cases</td>
<td>Current Project: 11-20 cases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data ranging from 4/5 cases</td>
<td>Current Project: 4-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data from 2-3 cases</td>
<td>Current Project: 2-3 cases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation Domains</td>
<td>It's an area to help others</td>
<td>Typical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data from 2-3</td>
<td>Inmates make me meaningful.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Growth/Transformation Domain</td>
<td>It's a way to give back</td>
<td>Typical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data as a way to give back</td>
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<td>Data as a way to give back</td>
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<td>Job satisfaction</td>
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Discussion and Conclusions

• Additional programmatic research needed in order to standardize, enhance, and review this innovative solution to end-of-life care for inmates
• Continued review/exploration of rehabilitative impact on inmate-caregivers
• More structured measures & tracking progress in program overtime
• Pre-post longitudinal assessment (upon enrollment, early in program, veteran in program)
• Research into the financial impact, feasibility, and potential for cost-savings
• More societal engagement & discussions about end-of-life care for the incarcerated.

References

• Cloyes et al (2013) found that inmate integrated had complex motivations, as well as reported personal transformations

Limitations and Future Steps

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