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Title: Doctors' awareness of the Gold standard framework (GSF) for palliation in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

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Body: Background: The GSF aims to improve the quality of patient care in the final year of life, to reduce hospitalisation by reducing length of stay, to facilitate rapid discharge and admission avoidance thereby reduce costs and improving cost effectiveness. Aims: To assess the awareness of the GSF programme in COPD amongst the doctors and nurses working in two University hospitals. Methods: An anonymous questionnaire was administered to doctors and nurses of various grades from February 2011 to February 2012 in two University hospitals. Results: 60 randomly selected doctors (5 consultants, 20 specialist registrars, 20 senior house officers, 15 house officers) and 20 nurses of different grades completed the questionnaire. 39 (49%) healthcare professionals had previous palliative care experience. Only a small proportion (14%) of them understood the GSF. 12 (15%) healthcare professionals were aware of prognostic indicators guidance. The majority of doctors and nurses (86%) considered COPD a terminal disease and were aware of the potential for palliation depending on the severity of the disease. Conclusions: This survey demonstrates that most doctors and nurses realise the need to consider palliation in severe COPD, though only a minority are aware of the framework designed to facilitate this in clinical practice. We suggest education and training of healthcare professionals on the GSF to increase awareness and thereby improve the quality of care for COPD patients receiving hospital care in the final year of life. Through organisational change, the GSF may enable better teamwork, leading to more coordinated cross boundary care. Reference National GSF centre overview paper.