Relocations and transfers of dying persons in hospitals and nursing homes

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An exploratory study in over 160 hospitals and nursing homes in Germany shows that approximately 20% (that means about 150,000) of all dying patients are relocated during their last days of life. The following main risks were identified: acute physical and mental deterioration and the external influence of the physicians or relatives. The surveyed employees show ways to improve the situation.

Key Words: End-of-life care, Relocation of dying patients

RESULTS

The following central findings were found: In approximately 20% of the hospitals and approx. 25% of the inpatient nursing homes there are transfers of dying people. This would mean a total of approx. 150,000 patients. Nursing homes transfer dying patients primarily to hospitals and only in very few cases in a hospice or home. Hospitals’ employees state that most of their transfers are carried out within their own hospital. In some cases, the relocation to a hospice takes place in a few homes. In the study, no clear preference of the day of the week or of the time could be identified. Physiological impairments such as dyspnoea, painful conditions or the deterioration of the general condition, can be identified as the central reasons for relocations. In contrast, mental reasons such as anxiety, confusion, or depressive mood are less important. Both the achieved quality unites the employees.

METHODS

In order to overcome this information deficit, a 27-question wide questionnaire was developed and addressed to employees from hospitals and nursing homes in 2016. The questionnaire determines the frequency of relocation (a), the date (b), the address of the relocation (c) and the influencing factors which justify or moderate the transfers (d). The questionnaire was answered particularly by nurses and doctors. The questionnaire could be answered in writing and in an online procedure. As far as possible and meaningful, the data of the total of 545 interviewees were clustered so that each institution was included as an average case in the statistical evaluation (e). In this way, 101 hospitals and 65 nursing homes of different sizes, carrier companies and federal states were included in the statistical evaluation. The study has an exploratory character. The results should be reviewed by available supply data and further studies should be supplemented.

REFERENCES


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