



Clinical Assessment Skills: Is this relevant to nursing?

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Introduction

The Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team (GRPCT) developed a series of Clinical Skills study days to assist nurses in developing and maintaining their clinical skills and clinical knowledge in the palliative care setting. The study days attracted 142 nurses from aged care, acute, subacute, inpatient, community and palliative care and addressed the fundamental principles of clinical assessment in palliative care. The days focused on four areas of clinical assessment: respiratory, abdominal, neurological and cognitive.

Aims:

- To deliver a comprehensive theory/practical based study day to enhance clinical assessment skills
- To equip nurses with the skills required to undertake a comprehensive assessment leading to strong evidence based knowledge
- To increase theoretical and practical knowledge of respiratory function, abdominal, neurological and cognitive assessments

Methodology:

A quality improvement project was undertaken to assess skill confidence and competence of nurses working with palliative care patients. Nurses were surveyed pre, post and six weeks post the study day for their level of competence and confidence in undertaking a clinical assessment. McNemar's Chi-square was used to compare proportions of participants in each category for each question on the survey between two time points. Data comparison was undertaken at 3 time points – pre, post, and 6 weeks post study days. P value <0.001.

Demographics

- 93% Division 1 Nurses
- 7% Enrolled Nurses (Medication Endorsed)

Workplace:

- Aged Care: 18%
- Acute: 18%
- Community: 17%
- Palliative Care: 35%
- Other: 12%



Examples of questions and scores obtained:

Do you feel confident and competent to undertake a comprehensive physical patient assessment?

	None or Somewhat	Confident
Pre	87%	13%
Post	29%	71%
6 week post	49%	51%

Do you feel confident and competent to undertake a respiratory assessment on your patient in the clinical setting?

	None or Somewhat	Confident
Pre	87%	13%
Post	36%	63%
6 week post	35%	65%

Do you feel confident and competent to undertake a cognitive assessment of your patients in the clinical setting?

	None or Somewhat	Confident
Pre	68%	32%
Post	22%	78%
6 week post	40%	60%

Do you feel confident and competent to undertake a neurological assessment of your patients in the clinical setting?

	None or Somewhat	Confident
Pre	84%	16%
Post	25%	75%
6 week post	45%	55%

Conclusion:



Survey results indicated that nurses had limited knowledge of clinical assessment skills prior to the study days. Post study day results demonstrated an increase in competence and confidence of nurses undertaking all aspects of clinical assessment. Six weeks post study day results demonstrated that in some areas there was statistical significance in confidence and competence. Written feedback indicated that nurses had a higher level of knowledge and better assessment skills after undertaking the Clinical Skills study days. The Clinical Skills study days are now being offered in the Aged Care sector throughout the Grampians region.

