Why the Interdisciplinary Team Approach Works in Palliative Care: Insights from Complexity Science

*Putting Systems and Complexity Science into Practice*

Billings, Montana
November 9, 2016

Elizabeth L. Ciemins, PhD, MPH, MA
Billings Clinic and AMGA

Health Care, Education and Research
Why the Interdisciplinary Team Approach Works:
Insights from Complexity Science

Elizabeth L. Ciemins, PhD, MPH, MA¹, Jeannine Brant, PhD, APRN, AOCN;² Diane Kersten, LCSW;³
Elizabeth Mullette, RN, MSN, CDE;⁴ and Dustin Dickerson, MS⁵

Abstract

Background: Although an interdisciplinary approach is considered best practice for caring for patients at the end of life, or in need of palliative care (PC) services, there is growing tension between healthcare organizations’ need to contain costs and the provision of this beneficial, yet resource-intensive service.

Objective: To support the interdisciplinary team (IDT) approach by recognizing organizations, teams, patients, and families as complex adaptive systems, illustrated by a qualitative study of the experiences, roles, and
Palliative Care

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

~World Health Organization
Why the Time is Right

MACRA - (Medicare Access & CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015)

- help systems focus on care quality and patients’ health and reward value
- ends the sustainable growth rate formula (SGR)
- ties Medicare FFS payments to quality or value through alternative payment models (APMs), e.g., ACOs, or select measures (MIPS) designed (in theory) to reward value
How does complexity science help us?

• Organizations as complex adaptive systems
• Interdependent attributes (of an IDT):
  – Self-organization & Emergence
  – Adaptable Elements
  – Distributed Control
  – Diversity
  – Non-linearity
“We yearn for frictionless, technological solutions. But people talking to people is still the way that norms and standards change.”

~Atul Gawande from “Slow Ideas,” New Yorker, July 29, 2013
Results

Patient/Team Interaction

Team Attributes
- Lack of predetermined agenda
- Shared purpose
- Holistic Thinking
- Comfort with dying
- Spirit of Inquiry

Individual Attributes
- Self-awareness
- Humility

Relational coordination
- Trust in the process

Personal Motivation
- Spiritual/moral calling
- Personal fulfillment

Professional Motivation
- Encouragement by peers/mentors
- Desire for team model
See ya at the roundtable discussion!

Elizabeth Ciemins: eciemins@amga.org