

1 June 2011

Dear Primary Care Colleagues,

A Charter for the care of people who are nearing the end of their life

“Caring for people nearing the end of their lives is part of the core business of General Practice... The GP and the primary care team occupy a central role in the delivery of end of life care in the community. This role is greatly valued by patients and remains pivotal to the effective provision of all other care. The importance of the holistic role of the family doctor is poised to come into its own in a way never previously encountered... This strategy affirms the College’s commitment to promote excellence in end of life care.”

RCGP End of Life Care Strategy June 2009

We are pleased to send you the new **Patient Charter for the care of people who are nearing the end of their life**. This has been developed by both the Patient Partnership Group and the End of Life Care English Working Group of the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Nursing. It represents an ideal of best practice that we think all patients should be able to seek from their primary healthcare team.

Patients, their carers and the people close to them need special care and support through the natural process of dying. GPs and the primary healthcare team have a special relationship with not just their patients but also with the patient’s carers and the people close to them.

The GP and the primary healthcare team have the ability to coordinate good care and to help reduce some of the worry and stress when someone is at the end of their life – the key is having a guide to best practice. **Patients, nurses, GPs, specialists and others from health and social care have worked together to develop this Charter**. It will be revised over time based on feedback from patients, carers and primary healthcare teams, but we hope it will be a means to encourage and support best care for your patients nearing the end of life.

Using the **accompanying guidance**, free to download from the RCGP website (www.rcgp.org.uk/endoflifecare), we suggest that you might:

- Discuss the Charter as a primary healthcare team, including the community and palliative care nurses you work with.
- Seek views from your patient group and talk about it with patients and carers who you are supporting.
- Add the name and contact number for the relevant person within your practice to the Charter.
- Give the Charter to patients and the carers of people who are nearing the end of their life e.g. those on the practice palliative care/Gold Standards Framework (GSF) Register in your practice – it may lead to further discussion and a need for some clarification.
- Display the Charter in your waiting room and include it in your practice information pack.
- Use the Charter as a standard against which to review your care. Such review/audit could be included as one of the aspects of your own appraisal and revalidation or practice accreditation.

If you feel you need help in implementing certain aspects of the Charter or require further training and support, discuss them with your local EOLC team/facilitators, or visit the RCGP website at www.rcgp.org.uk/endoflifecare or the GSF website at www.goldstandardsframework.nhs.uk

We hope that you will find this an invaluable resource.

All good wishes,

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