

Free papers 13–15 – Workforce development

013 CONCEPTUALISATION OF VOLUNTEERING IN PALLIATIVE CARE: A NARRATIVE SYNTHESIS OF THE LITERATURE

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Background Volunteering in the UK has recently been embraced under the banner of the 'Big Society' but its history has long been aligned to the development of the hospice movement. As the philosophy of palliative care has spread throughout the world, volunteer roles have evolved differently, influenced by local needs, local structures and the available resources. Although it is widely believed that volunteering makes important contributions to patients, their families, hospice organisations, individual volunteers and the wider society, attempts to quantify its impact or outcomes have been limited. This study aimed to develop a conceptual model through which volunteering in palliative care could be understood.

Methods Narrative synthesis was used to develop a conceptual model of volunteering in palliative care based on a systematic review of the literature regarding volunteering in palliative care.

Results A systematic search of the literature identified 5613 papers, of which 126 met the inclusion criteria. The review revealed three inter-related themes: (1) the impact of volunteering; (2) motivations of those volunteering; (3) the locus of control in volunteering in palliative care. Meta-ethnographic analysis produced a theoretical model in which satisfaction in volunteering is conceived as a continual process of negotiation between seeking to improve outcomes for the patient, family or organisation as well as to improve personal fulfilment and self-esteem of the individual volunteer. These aspects of volunteering may be in alignment or in opposition.

Conclusion This review identifies the range of influences that may act on an individual volunteering within an organisation, and suggests that the traditional processes of engaging and managing volunteers require reappraisal. Greater focus should be placed on understanding the benefits of volunteering both for the organisation and the individual and the measurement of both the process and outcomes associated with volunteering.