

Medi-Cal Palliative Care Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan (MCP) Learning Community November 18, 2022, Webinar Highlights

Jennifer Moore Ballentine, the new Chief Executive Officer of the Coalition for Compassionate Care of California (CCCC), opened the Medi-Cal Palliative Care MCP Learning Community November 2022, webinar, “Reducing Inequities in the Experience of Serious Illness.” She welcomed presenter, Allison Silvers, Chief Health Care Transformation Officer for the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC). Brittany Chambers, CAPC’s Director of Health Equity and Special Initiatives, co-investigator with Ms. Silvers on CAPC’s project to understand what goes wrong for Black patients during the course of a serious illness, was unfortunately unable to attend the webinar. The webinar recording is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OP6DtnWell0I>.

Ms. Silvers provided an overview of CAPC’s two-year project to identify and understand what goes wrong for Black patients with serious illness. The project began by conducting an extensive literature review to understand what is known about disparities in health care experiences and quality of life for Black people living with serious illness and their families. Major themes from the investigation found Black patients’ experience:

- Poorer quality pain/symptom management
- Less assessment and less treatment
- Poorer quality clinician-patient communication
 - Verbal and non-verbal differences noted
- Measurable differences in caregiver experiences, leading to greater impacts on the health and finances of future generations.

The analysis underscored symptom management inequities in the treatment of pain experienced by Black patients with serious illness compared to their white counterparts. One study noted that nearly half of physicians in training believe that Black patients have a higher pain tolerance than white patients. From their literature review, CAPC catalogued more than 150 interventions to improve quality of care for Black patients with serious illness and reduce disparities. Key approaches included:

- Community education about palliative care and hospice
 - Faith-based organizations were the most common partners
 - Use of storytelling in the African American tradition
- Addition of Community Health Workers/Lay Navigators
 - CHWs were also instrumental in improving serious illness communications/clarifying goals of care/advance care planning
- Data collection and targeted analysis of Black patients’ needs
- Accommodation of social needs

The presentation concluded with the following best practice recommendations for health plans to drive more equitable care:

- Systematic data-driven identification of patients with palliative care needs
- Required care manager assessments
- Incentivize provider training in equitable pain/symptom management and communication

CAPC additionally recommended the use of two new American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM) patient reported outcome measures for palliative care, that should help to monitor racial disparities. The measures assess how much patients felt heard and understood and if patients received the help they

wanted for their pain. CAPC provides a number of tools for providers and plans to improve health equity for people with serious illness, most of which are available free from the CAPC web site. These include:

- [Equitable Access to Quality Palliative Care for Black Patients: A National Scan of Challenges and Opportunities](#)
 - *Literature findings and links available through that page*
- [Health Equity in Palliative Care Toolkit](#)
- [Resources for Health Plans](#)
- [Clinician Training Recommendations by Discipline and Role](#)

Upcoming MCP Learning Community activities include an **open forum (Monday, December 12, 2022, 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM)** discussion on community supports and palliative care, and a **webinar (Friday, January 18, 2023, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM)** with five MCPs discussing the community supports benefits their plans currently offer and how they are aligned or their potential to be aligned with palliative care. Last, please register for the Medi-Cal Palliative Care Annual Convening on **Friday, March 31, 2023, 9 AM – 12 Noon** and **Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 9 AM – 12 Noon**. Registration links below.

[Click here to register for March 31](#)

[Click here to register for April 4](#)

The Coalition for Compassionate Care of California (CCCC) is leading the serious illness movement in California. MCPs can support the movement by becoming a CCCC Sustaining Supporter, Organizational Member, Sponsor of California's Palliative Care Summit, and hiring CCCC to provide staff training. For more information, please contact Keeta Scholl: kscholl@coalitionccc.org.