

Compassionate Communities as Public Health Action in Palliative Care

Public health approaches to end-of-life care emphasize traditional ideas such as prevention, harm-reduction and early intervention and develop and apply these through practices such as community development, health promotion, health literacy, ecological strategies, services redesign, and participatory relations. The basic idea is that the main concepts and methodologies that we employ to promote general health and wellbeing in our national health policies are equally relevant and applicable to the experiences of dying, bereavement, and long-term care because these end-of-life experiences bring with them their own raft of illness, disability, and social and physical risks. Compassionate communities as a collection of public health practices assume that it is not only health that is everyone's responsibility but also dying, loss, and caregiving. This lecture will introduce this approach outlining the rationale for compassionate communities and the key public health strategies that characterize them. The final part of the talk will describe their global spread and uptake while also briefly outlining some of the recurring challenges associated with their implementation and sustainability.