

Ensuring the quality of palliative care in Australia's prisons

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People in Australian prisons experience a higher burden of chronic disease and age-related disease earlier than those in the community. Consequently, they require palliative care earlier in life. People in prison are entitled to receive healthcare, including palliative care, that is equitable to care in the community. However, the prison environment introduces additional barriers to palliative care provision than are faced in the community, including the necessity of balancing priorities of security and access to healthcare.

The current demand for palliative care in the prison setting is unknown due to a lack of available data about the number of people in Australian prisons with palliative care needs. While data is collected about the health of people in Australian prisons every three years, reporting is not mandatory and there are no direct measures of palliative care.

Recommendations

- Improving data collection about palliative care need and services in Australian prisons is critical to proactively addressing rising demand for palliative care. This requires standardised, regular collection of data for:
 - Building an evidence-base to inform policy and service development
 - Identifying areas of greatest patient need
 - Evaluating the cost and cost-effectiveness of existing care, and
 - Monitoring quality of care and effectiveness of interventions
- Constructing a comprehensive and sustainable data collection strategy that is useful for both clinicians and policymakers is the first step to understanding the palliative care needs of people in prison and informing the development of future policy.

The design of the data set and collection strategy should be undertaken in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to prioritise the collection of critical information while minimising the burden on the system.

- A nationally consistent dataset and strategy with clear definitions, metadata, data management protocols, and reporting expectations should be developed for use in prisons. These should be supported by guidance on ways to effectively use data and translate findings into meaningful change.



AHHA acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Nation Peoples and the Traditional Custodians of this land. We respect their continued connection to land and sea, country, kin, and community. AHHA also pays our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging as the custodians of knowledge and lore.