Shared decision making in advanced MS and palliative care

Eli Silber, consultant neurologist
Kings College Hospital UK
An van Nunen, rehabilitation physician + coordinator palliative support team
National MS Centre Belgium
1. Role of PC (palliative care) in MS care: **Prognosis in MS**

- Balancing hope and despair
- Progression happens early

- **Causes of death**
  - Suicide (euthanasia)
  - Complications of chronic disability: infections, pressure sores, nutrition problems, respiratory problems (aspiration)
“The silent face of MS”

- Emphasis on early diagnosis and therapy
- Difficulty accessing specialist services (varies between countries/areas)
- Physical access
- Cognition and communication
- Family support
- Care homes / community care limited skills
- As out patients survive to older ages they develop other diseases e.g. cancer

Role of PC in MS
Our roles: Where do we fit in?

Diagnosis
- Underlying problems
- Disease types
- Current problems

Attempt to prevent disability

Symptom control/ “palliation”
- Physical
- Mental health

Rehabilitation

Role of PC in MS
## Comparison of advanced MS with other advanced diseases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>MS(^1)</th>
<th>Cancer(^2)</th>
<th>Heart disease(^2)</th>
<th>Respiratory disease(^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>35-96%</td>
<td>41-77%</td>
<td>34-77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>32-90%</td>
<td>69-82%</td>
<td>68-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6-68%</td>
<td>17-48%</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>23-65%</td>
<td>38-42%</td>
<td>27-44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathlessness</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>10-70%</td>
<td>60-88%</td>
<td>90-95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) King's study - % with symptom  
In general

- MS is incurable from diagnosis: no clear cut-off between curative – palliative phase. **Danger = waiting (too long) for terminal phase to discuss palliative and end-of-life issues.**

  PC experts can help doctors and teams to address these issues in time.

- MS can be progressive = **continued experience of loss/mourning process**: care for existential problems should be addressed as soon as they emerge.

  PC is expert in this matter and can be involved in existential crisis situations (even in early phases).
Similarities

Conventional PC

- Disease progression
  - Dyscomfort
  - Experience of loss

- Threatened QoL
- Terminal care
- Bereavement support

MS PC

- Disease progression
  - Dyscomfort
  - Experience of loss

- Threatened QoL
- Terminal care
- Bereavement support
## Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional PC</th>
<th>MS PC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existential problems:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Existential problems:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different perspective:</td>
<td>different perspective:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- restricted life span</td>
<td>- almost intact life span</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- more predictable disease course</td>
<td>- unpredictable disease course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenging for continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mental adaptation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of PC in MS
Differences

Conventional PC

- Clear **cut-off** curative - palliative phase (in most cases)
- Certain shortened **life span**
- **Barrier** for PC is becomes lower in time nowadays

MS PC

- No clear **cut-off** curative - palliative phase
- Occasional (uncertain) shortened **life span**
- **Barrier** to referral to PC in MS is higher then in cancer!
Differences

Conventional PC

- **Shorter time span of care:**
  - **Advantage:**
    - Quality and intensity of care input and support is needed for a shorter time.
    - Perspective of family: unbearable situation but for a short time. ...
  - **Disadvantage:** less time for building a relationship of trust, ...

MS PC

- **Longer time span of care:**
  - **Advantage:** knowing pt and families well = more time for building a relationship of trust, ...
  - **Disadvantage:**
    - Keeping teams creative and motivated in continuously looking for better comfort and support options
    - Families can also burn out.
    - ...

Role of PC in MS
Differences

Conventional PC

- Last days and weeks in a *nice environment* with special attention to create a home atmosphere
- Higher quota for staff – more resources.

MS PC

- Cognitive problems creating changes in relationships with family, carers, team + specific problems in assessing pain, anxiety, QoL.

- *Standard* hospital or MS center *setting* – living longer in a less nice environment!
- Standard quota for staff
- Resources!!
Creating partnerships: Caring for people with advanced disease involves a balance

Hospital  Community

Neurology  Rehabilitation

Palliative Care
Role of PC in MS
The MS Team

Doctors
GP
Neurologist
Rehab
Psychiatrist

Nurses
Ward / MS
Continence
District

Extended family / friends
Support organisations
Work

Family
Patient
Palliative care

Therapy
Physio, OT
Speech / wheelchair

Social services/ professional carers

Role of PC in MS
What is good about nurses?

• Numbers
  – Lots! Widespread

• Skills
  – Can learn anything
  – Breadth or depth

• Flexibility
  – Work patterns
  – Hospital and community
  – Skill sets

Role of PC in MS
Which nurses?

- **Specialist MS neurology nurses**
  - Hospital or community based
  - Wealth of experience
  - 300-500 case load
  - Link to consultant / specialist services

- **Community matron**
  - Community based / link to community teams / GPs
  - Smaller case load “complex cases”

- Hospital nurses
- Palliative nurses
- Other specialist nurses: Mental health, continence

Role of PC in MS
Different models of working

Neurology: Diagnosis, review, crisis management, progression

Palliative care: intense over shorter time with bereavement

Role of PC in MS
We asked neurologists, rehabilitation specialists and palliative care consultants about core elements of their service.
End of life support

- Provided by:
  - 100% palliative physicians
  - 73% neurologists
    - 53% occasionally, 20% often.
  - 60% of rehabilitation physicians
    - 47% occasionally, 13% often.
Research Question:
Can the needs of people severely affected by MS be met by a Palliative Care Service?

3 year research project funded by MS Society:
- Service modelling study
- Development of a new clinical service
- Evaluation of the service
Key Issues Arising From Patient Interviews

- Loss and change
- Support needs: emotional and practical
- Information needs: services, aids and adaptations, benefits, end-of-life planning
- Symptom control
- Care issues: co-ordination, continuity, inpatient care
This led to Service Development

• **Clinical Service**
  – Improving gaps in continuity of care & communication
  – Symptom control
  – Complex psychosocial support
  – End of life care planning

• **Information**
  – Mapping existing services

• **Education**
  – Information exchange between professional groups
Palliative Care Service for PwMS

- Psychosocial worker
- Palliative care consultant
- Palliative care nurse
- Service co-ordinator
PwMS included

Patients 69

Not in study 17

In study 52

Indicates point of clinical intervention

Taken off study
(1 Protocol violation 1 PwMS died)

Taken off study
(2 PwMS died)

Taken off study
(1 PwMS became severely ill)

25 pre study as well!

Triggers for referral to MS PC
Differences at 4-6 weeks

• PwMS in FI group had small but significant improvement in nausea compared to SI group (p=0.039)

• PwMS in FI group more likely to have seen a paid carer more recently than in SI group (p=0.018)

• Lower costs
How to realize this in Nat. MS Center Melsbroek?
PST = palliative support team!

Can we help?
PST = 5 pall experts rehab dr + nurse + psychologist + social worker + pastor

Role of PC in MS

Palliative support team
Neuro-medical care
Rehabilitation
Palliative support team in National MS Centre Melsbroek

- Advice in advanced pain and symptom control management (f.e. switch to step 3 on pain ladder, starting up morphine pump, treating dyspnea and anxiety,...)

- Information bank: counseling pts, relatives, teams on palliative care, end-of-life decisions, making a will, euthanasia, ...

- Teaching, coaching and advising teams in terminal fase challenges like
  - prioritizing in care (f.e. being able to stop regular care rituals if not helpful or wanted by patient, making team goals on this new (last) goals)
  - communication with/between pts and relatives
  - ...

Role of PC in MS
Palliative support team in National MS Centre Melsbroek

- **Complex psychological and social needs**: existential issues, end-of-life decisions,...
- **Bereavement support**

- **Euthanasia**: ± 5 cases last years (1-2 in the center)
  - **Information**: bank for pts, relatives and team
  - Euthanasia-procedure in NMSC: ‘**palliative filter’** = can PST add care options to relieve the suffering of patients asking for euthanasia
  - **Counseling and supporting patient and relatives in the whole process**
  - Team coaching and support (before, during, after): how to care for pt in the last days, how to deal with special requests of a patient, how to say goodbye,...
2. Triggers for input of palliative care in MS

Not all patients with advanced MS need the expertise of PC-specialist!

1. **Triggers coming from PATIENTS:**
   
   1. Expressing *dyscomfort*: advanced symptoms with insufficient response of conventional care (pain, anxiety,...)
   
   2. Expressing *existential pain*, suffering and *disease fatigue*: e.g. only being able to receive care and not giving to others/contributing to the lives of others anymore.

   3. Patient expressing *questions and wishes* about advanced care planning, palliative and/or *end-of-life issues* (incl. euthanasia).
Triggers for input of palliative care in MS

2 Triggers coming from RELATIVES:

1. Expressing existential pain, suffering and disease fatigue
2. Expressing questions on and bringing in ideas about advanced care planning, palliative and/or end-of-life issues
Triggers for input of palliative care in MS

3 Triggers coming from CARE TEAM:

1. Advanced symptoms with insufficient response of conventional care (pain, anxiety, ...)

2. Need for clear instructions about medical interventions in life-threatening situations with need for care decisions (artificial nutrition, referral to acute hospital, ventilatory support, ...)

3. Detecting signals of existential questions in a patient or relative

4. Suffering of the team: dealing with progressive loss and suffering, lack of contact with some patients (cognition and communication pbs), handling conduct disorders, ...
3. Symptoms needing palliative care input (1)

- Complex pain syndromes
- **Dehydration and malnutrition** in a severely disabled person (esp. cognitively frail person) needing decisions on tube feeding
- **Mouth hygiene** problems (esp. in non-cooperative person)
- **Severe respiratory problems** (limited respiratory volume and weak cough strength) needing ventilatory support

- **Anxiety and fear of dying** (alone)
- **Existential pain and fatigue**: not being able to contribute anymore, only being able to be a receiver of care, feelings of meaninglessness,...
What does palliative care do well?

- Sees someone more quickly
- Cover hospital, home, community
- Nursing teams, hospices
- Not limited by waiting lists, huge clinics...i.e. can devote more time to specific patients
- Not scared of death, families, distress...
- Experience with opioids, end of life issues
If palliative care takes on neurology patients we may need new models of working

• With existing teams
• One off and intermittent care rather than ongoing care
• More knowledge and experience in neurology
• Is palliative care willing, interested and capable of taking on neurology?
Symptom management- Concise Guidance

[URL] http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/content

CONCISE GUIDANCE TO GOOD PRACTICE
A series of evidence-based guidelines for clinical management

NUMBER 10
Long-term neurological conditions: management at the interface between neurology, rehabilitation and palliative care
NATIONAL GUIDELINES

March 2008

CLINICAL STANDARDS
Royal College of Physicians

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PALLIATIVE CARE

BSRM
Acute care:
“Swing your legs over the bed”

What happens when our patients are admitted to acute general wards?

Advanced care planning
Chronic conditions in hospital: Checklist 1

• Prior to admission
  – Is it necessary? Can it be planned?

• On admission
  – Inform caring team
  – Check medication / equipment
  – Check competence
Chronic conditions in hospital: Checklist 2

- **Review in hospital**
  - Posture / spasticity / pressure sores
  - Anticoagulation
  - Bladder / bowels
  - Swallow / nutrition / Respiration
  - Cognition / depression
  - Pain

- **If considering a procedure**
  - ? Appropriate/ competent

- **Prior to discharge**
  - Appropriate for patient / family
  - Inform team/ arrange follow up
Chronic conditions in hospital: Checklist 2

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MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005

• In force since 2007
• Broad objectives:
  – To support adults with impaired capacity so that they can make decisions for themselves wherever possible
  – Where they cannot take decisions, to provide a protective framework for decision-making
  – To provide a framework for those who have to take and implement decisions
• Much attention has focussed on implementation and compliance
• Intended by government to deliver cultural change
MENTAL CAPACITY ACT
Principles

- Capacity
- Autonomy (including the opportunity to make decisions which health professionals disagree with)
- Voluntary process
- Best interest for the individual
- Future planning
- The role of proxy in supporting decisions
  - Lasting power of attorney
  - Court appointed
MCA: FIVE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

1. Presumption of capacity
2. Individuals should be supported where possible so that they can make their own decisions
3. People have the right to make decisions that may seem eccentric
4. Decisions should be in a person’s best interests
5. Decisions should be as unrestrictive as possible
A QUICK SUMMARY
ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING

1. What decision has to be made?
2. Does the person have capacity to make it?
   – What support is required to help them make it?
3. If no capacity:
   – Is there a proxy - lasting power of attorney or a Deputy - to make the decision?
   – If it involves treatment, is there an advance decision refusing it?
4. In all cases where the person doesn’t have capacity & there is no valid & applicable advance decision refusing treatment, ask:
5. WHAT ARE THE PERSON’S BEST INTERESTS?
BUT REMEMBER FUTURE PLANNING IS VOLUNTARY

• People should be offered chance but NOT required to make advance care plans, or advance decisions refusing treatment, or appoint LPAs

• Risks:
  – asking at inappropriate times or in an inappropriate way
  – forcing people to have discussions they do not want to have - increasing rather than reducing distress
  – painting by numbers (closed not open discussions)
  – quality of care will be judged by numbers of advance care plans. They are a tool not an outcome
ACP and end-of-life decisions (1)

➤ **When?** Goal = in advance (‘Being prepared brings mental rest.’)

- **As soon as possible**: looking at individual in his specific situation (initiative comes from patient, relative, doctor or care team)
  - The question ‘Should we discuss end of life decisions you think?’ **can be taken as an opportunity or dropped by patient** (when not ready)

- **As late as needed**: if professional observes triggers for PC (see above).
ACP and end-of-life decisions (2)

How?

- Conversation patient ∞ medical doctor (if wanted + team member s.a. nurse of psychologist)
- Patient decides whether presence of relative is wanted. Professional can make suggestions on this (esp. in cognitive pbs + to care for the relationship) but does not impose his opinion.
- Professional invests sufficient time and mental space for exploration and reflection.
- Inviting patient to come back on this issue. Never closing the conversation: leaving it open for evolution.
- If patient unable to give informed consent: conversation doctor ∞ relative.
ACP and end-of-life decisions (3)

- Euthanasia: a special case (in B, NL, Lux)
  - Conversation patient ∞ medical doctor should start on initiative of the patient (if wanted + team member s.a. nurse of psychologist)
  - Patient decides whether presence of relative is wanted.
  - Professional invests sufficient time and mental space for exploration and reflection.
  - Inviting patient to come back on this issue. Never close the conversation: leaving it always open for evolution.
  - Personal opinion: medical doctor can suggest himself the option of euthanasia in one specific situation: if palliative care is failing in relieving the suffering of a patient in a (pre)terminal stage e.g. MND, MS + cancer,...
Legislation in Belgium

3 relevant laws supporting patients’ roles in medical decision making— all published in 2002

Law on Patient Rights

s.a.: Right on agreement or refusal of medical examinations and treatment.
- Making a negative will (I express what I do not wish)

Law on Palliative Care

- "Every patient has the right to receive palliative care at the end of his life."

- Legislation organising existing PC in Belgium (criteria for different PC-settings in Belgium, starting point for financing and evaluation of PC)

Law on Euthanasia
Law on Euthanasia (May 2002)

Ending life of a person on his own request is legal if:
- The patient
  - = adult (≥ 18y)
  - = legal capable (has performant capacity to think and to act)
- Experiences unbearable physical and/or psychic suffering
- In the context of incurable medical condition (due to a disease or accident) with no perspective of improvement:
  - Request (written) = voluntarily (without pressure of others), sustainable and lasting request.
- It is performed by a medical doctor + respecting a strict procedure
Working together requires

- Willing partners
- Realistic understanding and expectations of the other service
- Resources
"Life circles": the relationship of neurology, rehabilitation and palliative care for people with long term neurological conditions

Neurology

Long term support

Rehabilitation

Rapidly Progressive Conditions

Death

Terminal care

Role of PC in MS
Thanks for your attention