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The preference of the medical professionals for pediatric palliative care according to the ACP knowledge or the attitude of appropriate age disclosing terminal illness

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Aim: We aimed to investigate the perceptions of health care professionals about appropriate age disclosing terminal illness, awareness of ACP and the relationship between ACP knowledge, disclosing age and the preference for palliative care for children.

Methods: We administered nationwide questionnaires to 928 physicians from the 12 hospitals and the Korean Medical Association. We asked about the age at which the pediatric patients could be notified of their terminal illness by 4 groups: 4 years old or older, 12 years old or older, 15 years old or older, or not. In addition, we surveyed the questionnaires about the knowledge of ACP of the medical staff, the preference of the pediatric hospice palliative care, aggressive treatment and life-sustaining treatment preference.

Results: In the appropriate age disclosing terminal illness, more than 50% of the physicians responded that patients under the age of 15 should be informed about their terminal status. Health care professionals who had knowledge of the ACP responded that disclosing terminal illness is possible at a younger age. Palliative care preference in pediatric patients who were expected to expire within months was higher when health care professionals had knowledge of ACPs compared to those without knowledge. The age of the terminal status notification, the health care professionals who thought to be available at a lower age have a higher preference for palliative care and has less preference for aggressive treatment and life-sustaining treatment. The same results were obtained when deaths were expected within weeks or days.

Conclusion: Our study confirmed that there is a difference in the preference of the health care professionals for pediatric palliative care according to the ACP knowledge of the medical staff or the appropriate age disclosing terminal illness. Future research should focus on strategies for inducing changes in perceptions of health care professionals and identifying other obstacles for the pediatric palliative care.

Biography

Eun Kyo Kang has her expertise in palliative care and improving public health. Through this study, she tried to find out the factors affecting the perception of medical professionals about pediatric palliative care.

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