

RESEARCH BRIEF - e-Shift, an innovative home care model: Perceptions of Family and Friend Caregivers

What is the topic of this research?

In response to needs of older adults at the end-of-life and challenges in the recruitment and retention of health care providers in home care in the South West Community Care Access Centre, a new and innovative model of home care, eShift, has been developed. The eShift model links unregulated providers (technicians) providing home care to a remotely-situated Directing Registered Nurse (DRN), through a smart phone application using real-time communication and documentation technology. The DRN monitors and directs appropriate, safe, and effective care provided in collaboration with the technician in real-time, enhancing quality of care delivery for older adults and their family caregivers.

How was the study done?

Interviews were conducted with 15 family/friend caregivers of individuals who received eShift palliative home care. Interviews were conducted up to one year after the patient's death on average 1-1.5 hours in length. Caregivers were asked to rate aspects of their eShift palliative home care experience; specifically respite, quality of care, and relationships with the eShift healthcare team

What did the researchers find?

Family caregivers reported a decrease in stress indicators prior to and during eShift care. At the point of receiving eShift, caregivers described the burden of care as being overwhelming. Without eShift, many participants stated they would have either had to pay for full time nursing care or would have sent their family member to hospital.

Caregivers also reported a statistically significant improvement in sleep quality with the introduction of eShift. Before eShift, family caregivers described interrupted sleep, some waking up every 1-2 hours.

"I had a baby monitor on her but I was upstairs and she was on the main floor bedroom. And so it just got too much. I was getting up every hour, every two hours as soon as I'd hear anything. You become super sensitive."

Caregivers reported positive relationships with all members of the eShift care team, in particularly the eShift Technician and the Visiting Nurse.

A few caregivers commented that they encountered challenges when there was inconsistent staffing of the eShift Technician from shift to shift. Caregivers found they needed to orientate each new eShift Technician to the home, and the care provided to their family member (recipient of care).

Having a healthcare professional present assisted with the physical aspects of care but also provided emotional support to the caregivers. It provided reassurance that their family/friend was well cared for while they were able to rest.

"I think emotionally it had helped [name] to have someone here and know that I was getting some rest. As well as physical because they were helping him physically when he needed to go to the washroom"

Overall caregivers were very satisfied with eShift service and agreed that both they, and their family member/friend received the necessary care in a timely manner. Caregivers also strongly agreed that eShift allowed for their loved one to die in their place of choice. Through the interviews, caregivers expressed great appreciation for the care provided and believed that eShift palliative care was instrumental in achieving the desired outcomes.

Recommendations to support patients and families?

- 1) Promote relationships between caregivers and health care providers by decreasing the number different individuals introduced into the home.
- 2) Ensure that all eShift technicians have the ability administer medication to allow caregivers to sleep uninterrupted.
- 3) Introduce day shifts to further ease the burden of care on caregivers.

Who are the researchers?

A team of researchers are led by co-principal investigators:

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