

## section 2.1.1: the role of the multidisciplinary team

### 1. Social work

Social workers offer specific skills which relate to social and cultural aspects of care for the management of palliative patients and their families.

These functions include provision of:

- **a psychosocial assessment** (see Section 2.1 - *Assessment Guidelines*) including patient and family history taking
- **assistance with family adjustment**
  - facilitating difficult conversations at times of clinical change, eg diagnosis of malignancy/recurrence of disease
  - preparing for and participating in family meetings
  - mediation in situations of complex family dynamics, eg managing conflict, eg a family member returning from overseas or interstate
  - working with children and adolescents
- **advocacy** in negotiating a complex health system
- **communication** of relevant issues arising within patient and family settings to the interdisciplinary team
- **practical assistance for patients and caregivers and linking with community services such as:**
  - respite options within the home or in residential care facilities
  - financial issues
    - Centrelink/DVA allowances
    - Family and Youth Services (FAYS) assisted funeral arrangements
    - emergency financial assistance
    - negotiating with private health insurers
  - legal issues
    - Enduring Power of Attorney, Enduring Power of Guardianship, Consent to Medical Treatment and Palliative Care, Guardianship issues
    - Wills
- **therapeutic interventions including**
  - counselling
    - individual or family centred
    - strength and resilience based counselling in adjusting to the personal and social consequences of illness, loss, disability and death
  - managing grief, anxiety, depression, stress and anger
  - exploring spiritual issues
  - bereavement follow-up
- **participation in discharge planning**, liaising with community support agencies, including health insurers
- advising on **complex ethical issues**
- considering **multidimensional aspects of pain and symptom management** including guided imagery, distraction techniques

**assistance with accommodation** issues which may include:

- timing and arrangement of assessment by the Aged Care and Assessment Team
- financial and legal aspects involved in placement in a residential aged care facility
- **staff assistance** with:
  - self care strategies
  - managing compassion fatigue
  - timely debriefing following stressful events in the workplace
  - **grief and bereavement support** and interventions