

Northeastern Ontario Palliative Care Conference



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Continuing Education
and Professional Development



NNPCN - PCIEF Palliative Care
Interdisciplinary Education Funding

Friday, March 27, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. EST

NOSM University Sudbury Campus and WebEx

Conference Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the evolving role of palliative care and key advocacy priorities in promoting equitable, person-centered care.
2. Examine interprofessional strategies and innovative approaches that strengthen collaboration, improve access, and enhance the quality of palliative care, particularly in rural and remote contexts.
3. Identify opportunities and challenges in advancing palliative care across diverse care settings and regions.

This conference will incorporate interactivity by ensuring 25% of the session time is dedicated to Q&A and discussion

Time	Agenda Item
8:00 – 8:30	Registration & Breakfast
8:30 – 8:45	Welcome and housekeeping notes
8:45 – 9:45	Care beyond cure: the courage to be light in heavy moments Keynote Speaker: Sandy El Bitar Description: In this session, Sandy El Bitar explores what it means to offer care when cure is no longer the goal and presence becomes the deepest form of medicine. Drawing from nearly two decades in hospitals, shelters, and palliative and end of life care, she invites participants to reflect on how their own beliefs about living and dying shape the way they accompany others. Through playfulness and emotional honesty, she introduces the five humour habits as accessible tools for navigating fear, uncertainty and the full complexity of human emotion, while also tending to the nervous system and protecting caregivers from burnout. Learning Objectives 1. Reflect on personal philosophies of living and dying to understand how beliefs about mortality shape clinical presence and care. 2. Explain how intentional good-natured humour supports emotional regulation, relational connection, meaning-making, and human connection during challenging situations. 3. Analyze the five humour habits to determine how these practices can support patients, families, and interprofessional teams when navigating uncertainty, grief, and fear. 4. Apply awareness of nervous-system responses and creative practices to strengthen resilience and reduce burnout in palliative care work.
9:45 – 10:30	Topic: Literature Review– Technology in Palliative Care Speakers: NOSM U Learners; Tess Dufour, Liam Nicol & Rebecca Chau

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify the potential benefits and challenges of integrating modern technology into your palliative care practice.
2. Compare different tools available to determine if integrating technology into your practice will improve your experience and the experience of your patients.

10:30 – 11:00

Break

11:00 – 11:30

Regional Approach

Speaker: Eliisa Makela

Learning Objectives

1. Describe how Ontario Health's provincial and regional structures support coordinated palliative care in the North East.
2. Identify current Ontario Health priorities related to palliative care and how they guide regional direction and practice.

11:30 – 12:30

Topic: Lightning Talks

These shorter talks are delivered by care providers highlighting their innovations, research and initiatives to providing palliative care within rural communities

Format: 12 minutes per speaker including a few minutes for Q&A.

Speakers:

- Lianne Lavergne - *Palliative Care Rounds in Long-Term Care - Improving Communication & Planning*
- Sabrina Maisonneuve - *At ease with the uneasy: A qualitative analysis*
- Laura Wilson - *Access to 24/7 Palliative Care in First Nations Communities*
- Shandel Burke - *ALS Society of Canada*
- Tracey Lessard - *Seasons of Grief: Children's Grief Program*

Learning Objectives

1. Describe recent innovations or community-based initiatives that improve access to palliative care in rural and remote regions of Northeastern Ontario
2. Analyze the impact of a specific palliative care research project or resource-sharing initiative on patient outcomes in underserved populations
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of interdisciplinary strategies used to implement culturally safe palliative care services in Indigenous or Francophone communities in Northeastern Ontario

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12:30 – 1:15 Lunch

Concurrent Sessions

**Includes 10 min transition time and snacks/beverages*

1:15 – 2:15

Concurrent Session Block 1

Session A

Primary Level
Care

Main room
MSE 107

Topic: What is Palliative Care?

Speakers: Dr. Nicki Apostle

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate between Palliative Care Medicine and a Palliative Care Approach in terms of providers, focus, training, recognition, and overarching goals of care.
2. Explore common language and terminology used in primary-level palliative care to support clear, consistent communication with patients, families, and the care team.
3. Clarify key palliative care definitions and concepts to build a shared understanding across disciplines.
4. Identify the core elements of a primary-level palliative care approach and when to integrate them into everyday practice.

Session B

Specialty
Level Care

HSERC 242

Topic: Pediatric Palliative Care

Speakers: Vicky Wilton & Dr. Sean Murray

Learning Objectives

1. Describe how children at different developmental stages understand and respond to conversations about serious illness.
2. Demonstrate communication strategies that support honest, compassionate discussions about serious illness with children and their families.
3. Assess both subjective and objective expressions of symptoms in children to accurately interpret and manage their experiences of pain and distress.
4. Apply trauma-informed approaches to minimize fear and anxiety in children during necessary but potentially painful treatments.
5. Support parents and caregivers in making shared, value-based decisions for their dying child through empathetic communication and multidisciplinary collaboration.

Session C

Psychosocial
Care

HSERC 218

Topic: Caregiver Education

Speakers: Erin Bignell

Learning Objectives

1. Identify community and healthcare resources available in Northeast Ontario that support caregivers and families throughout the palliative care journey.

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2. Analyze the emotional, physical, and social challenges experienced by caregivers of patients nearing end of life.
3. Discuss strategies to engage caregivers as integral members of the palliative care team.
4. Develop approaches to integrate caregiver education and support into routine palliative care practice.

2:25 – 3:25

Concurrent Session Block 2

Session A

Primary Level
Care

Main room
MSE 107

Topic: Identifying Patients who would benefit from a palliative approach to care & early identification

Speaker: Celine Lamb

Learning Objectives

1. Apply the Surprise Question to identify patients who may benefit from a palliative care approach across both malignant and non-malignant conditions.
2. Interpret the Gold Standards Framework (GSF) to guide assessment and planning for patients with progressive life-limiting illnesses.
3. Identify patients who would benefit from a palliative approach to care based on clinical indicators and disease trajectories.
4. Communicate the rationale for a palliative approach to patients, families, and interprofessional team members using clear, compassionate, and patient-centered language.
5. Develop an individualized care plan, including references, in collaboration with patients, families, and caregivers that aligns with patient values, goals, and preferences.

Session B

Specialty
Level Care

HSERC 242

Topic: Pharmacological Management for Psychiatric Patients Towards End of Life

Speakers: Julie Leighton-Phelps & Chantal Byrnes Leadbeater

Learning Objectives

1. Medication Management and Symptom Control
 - Identify common challenges in managing psychotropic and palliative medications concurrently (e.g., drug–drug interactions, risk of sedation, delirium, adherence concerns).
 - Develop strategies to balance mental health stabilization with effective symptom management in life-limiting illness.
2. Communication and Therapeutic Interaction

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	• Demonstrate practical approaches to engaging patients with psychotic disorders, including techniques to de-escalate distress, maintain therapeutic rapport, and set clear, consistent boundaries. • Practice tailoring communication strategies to accommodate fluctuating insight, paranoia, or mistrust in the context of end-of-life discussions. 3. Collaborative and Wholistic Care Planning • Integrate psychiatric, medical, and palliative care principles when developing care plans, recognizing when to involve psychiatry, social work, or ethics consultations. • Apply “tips and tricks” for navigating difficult cases, including building trust with patients/families, adapting goals of care conversations, and supporting interdisciplinary collaboration.
Session C Psychosocial Care HSERC 218	Topic: Grief and Bereavement Speakers: Carol Simon Learning Objectives 1. Recognize indicators of change in a patient’s disease trajectory that require coordinated interprofessional and psychosocial support. 2. Collaborate with patients and team members to develop strategies that empower patient self-advocacy as care needs evolve. 3. Appraise evidence-informed interprofessional approaches to supporting anticipatory grief across the disease trajectory.
3:30 – 4:15	Panel Session Speakers: Dr. Inez Jinnah, Celine Lamb, Pam Simpson, Dr. Nicki Apostle, Tracy Byron This panel will highlight recent palliative care improvements across the North East and explore how successful regional initiatives can be adapted and applied in local settings. Panelists will share practical insights, lessons learned, and strategies that frontline providers can take back to their communities. Learning Objectives: 1. Recognize key palliative care achievements and system improvements across the North East in 2025–2026. 2. Reflect on how similar approaches and changes can be applied within your own local community and care context. 3. Access resources available to care providers in Northern Ontario



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4:15 – 4:30	Closing Remarks

Please complete an evaluation

This activity meets the certification criteria of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and has been certified by the Continuing Education and Professional Development Office at NOSM University for up to 6 Mainpro+® Certified Activity credits.

NOTES

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