Palliating the Symptoms of Advanced Heart Failure Pilot Project, The Prince Charles Hospital and Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospitals.

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This project is funded by the Department of Health and Ageing via a Local Palliative Care Grant until March 2009.

The aim of the project is to improve service provision for patients with Advanced Heart Failure (AHF).

AHF is associated with higher morbidity and mortality than most advanced malignancies, yet current end-of-life pathways have predominantly focused on the needs of clients with malignant disease. An important distinction between Heart Failure and cancer-related diseases is the fact that the palliative phase of heart failure is longer, up to 12 months. This results in funding and resource allocation issues for patients who wish to remain in their homes for end-of-life care over a longer duration.

Project interventions include:
Develop heart failure palliative indicators or referral identifiers;
Develop evidenced based guidelines for managing common symptoms of end stage heart failure;
Appoint a AHF Care Coordinator (from existing Heart Failure Services or the Project Officer) to assist in coordinating community health services to support individuals' needs in the community;
Support palliative phase patients whose needs exceed the funding models of HACC or CAPPS packages;
Assist those with spiritual or psychosocial distress to access appropriate psychological support;
Educate all community health care providers in the specific needs of patients and carers with palliative phase HF.

The project evaluation will assess the impact of the new model of service delivery in improving quality of life, controlling symptoms and the utilisation patterns of acute and community health care services. It is hoped that the recommendations will provide valuable evidence not only for the development of AHF Pathways, but the needs of those with end stage chronic disease states.