Activating Advance-care planning in LTC: The Impact of Illness Trajectory Pamphlets

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BACKGROUND

Advanced care planning(ACP):

- Process of discussing values and wishes about future care

- Encourages discussions between residents, families, and staff

Barriers to ACP in LTC include:

- Staff discomfort

- Lack of initiative and reluctance from family members

- Lack of available tools to support such discussions

OBJECTIVE

- Explore the impact of illness trajectory pamphlets on advance care planning

METHODS

- Four LTC homes in Southern Ontario used a wall display to distribute five illness trajectory pamphlets
- Short paper based evaluations prompted residents and families to comment on:
  - content-based criteria (i.e. clarity and relevance)
  - action-based criteria (i.e. activation of conversations with care providers)
- Pamphlets were also evaluated by residents and families via focus groups

RESULTS

- 212 pamphlets were used by residents and families from April to September 2016

- Pamphlets addressing frailty (N=51) and dementia (N=58) were most commonly used (Figure 1)
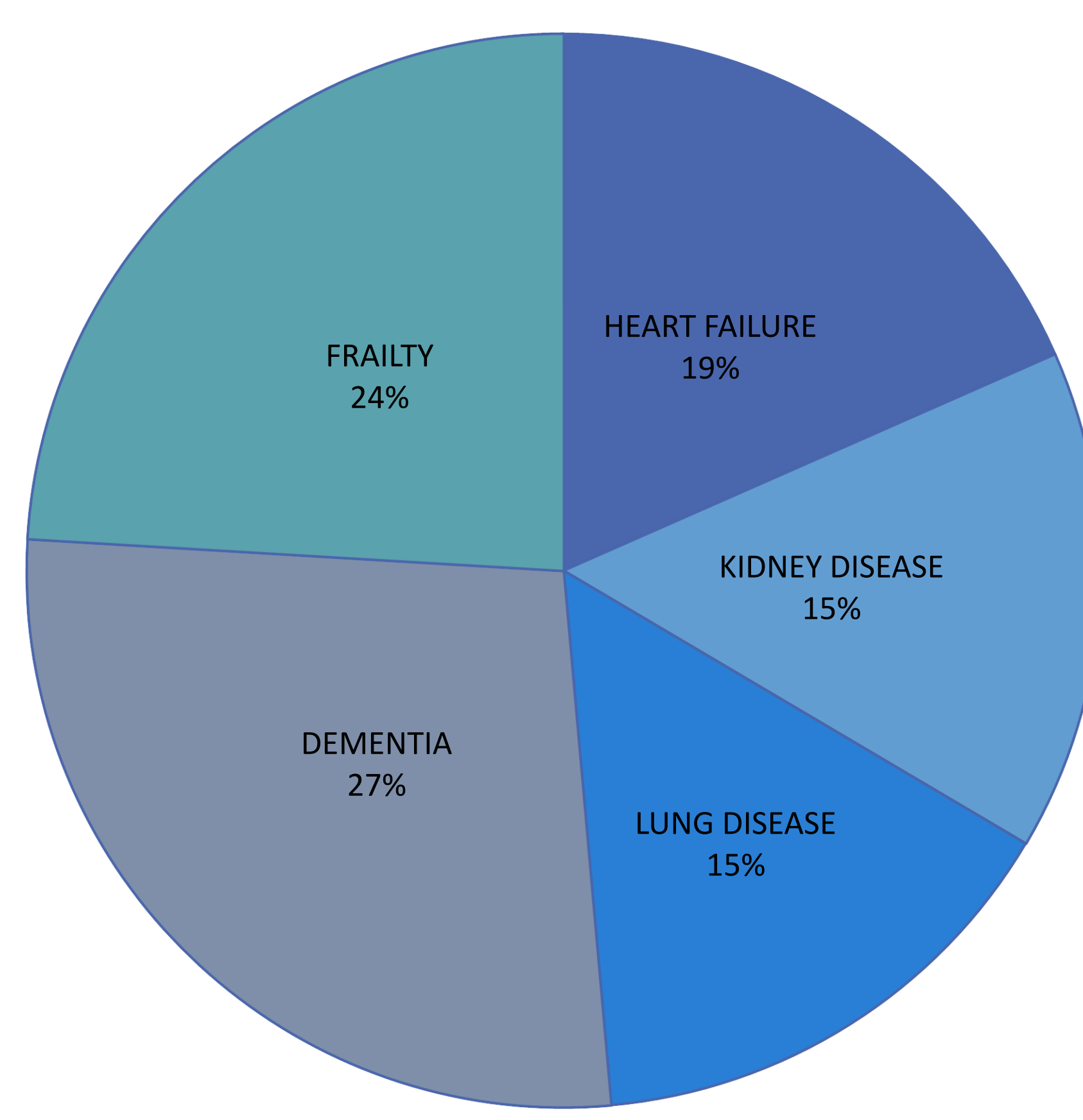

Figure 1: Pamphlet distribution

- Survey and focus group findings suggested the most helpful elements of the pamphlets include:
  - signs and symptoms of advanced illness
  - prompting questions
  - web-based links

- More than two-thirds of residents and family members were more comfortable with ACP issues after reading the pamphlets (Table 1)
- Using pamphlets rarely activated self-reported advance care planning activities (Table 2)

Table 1: Action Based Criteria Results (Comfort)

Criteria	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Was encouraged to think about my values or goals of care	3 (5.9%)	1 (2.0%)	10 (19.6%)	23 (45.1%)	14 (27.5%)
Knew what to ask about future care needs	2 (3.8%)	2 (3.8%)	8 (15.4%)	30 (57.7%)	10 (19.2%)
Felt more comfortable to explore end-of-life values and preferences	1 (2.0%)	2 (3.9%)	12 (23.5%)	27 (49.1%)	9 (17.6%)
Felt more knowledgeable about the trajectory of his/her illness	2 (3.9%)	2 (3.6%)	12 (23.5%)	20 (39.2%)	15 (27.3%)

Table 2: Action Based Criteria Results (Engagement)

Criteria	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Spoke with a health care provider about information in the pamphlet	4 (7.8%)	11 (21.6%)	15 (29.4%)	15 (29.4%)	6 (11.8%)
Started speaking to family member/ friend about care preferences/values	4 (8.2%)	4 (8.2%)	10 (20.4%)	20 (40.8%)	11 (22.4%)
Plan to have more conversations with family member/friend	2 (3.8%)	3 (5.8%)	13 (25.0%)	23 (44.2%)	11 (21.2%)
Plan to have more conversations with health care team	2 (3.8%)	3 (5.8%)	13 (25.0%)	23 (44.2%)	11 (21.2%)

CONCLUSIONS

- Most residents and family perceived content as useful and would share it
- Using the pamphlets improved comfort in discussing values and care preferences about end-of-life care
- Many residents and family/friends reported the intention to engage in future conversations
- Using the pamphlets rarely activated self-reported ACP activities

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- Alternate methods of pamphlet distribution and staff follow-up will be considered

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES