



## THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **Notre Dame's Chair in Palliative Medicine Research has been awarded a \$1.06-million grant**

*The University of Notre Dame Australia's Chair in Palliative Medicine Research, Professor David Kissane, has been awarded a \$1.06-million grant from the Australian Department of Health for a new project titled: "Education and assessment for psychosocial and existential wellbeing in palliative care".*

Part of the Public Health and Chronic Disease Program, this collaborative National Palliative Care Project aimed at improving the quality of palliative care service delivery in Australia will be led by Professor Kissane in partnership with the Cunningham Palliative Care Research Centre at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney.

"Currently, patients with unrecognised depression, unaddressed demoralisation and unabating anxiety account for the most vulnerable patients in palliative care, with limited access to skilled staff to offer support and evidence-based management," explains Professor Kissane. "These patients are in dire need of treatment to help them adjust and to prevent suicidal thinking, yet the effective medication and counselling options available remain underutilised in palliative care."

The education and knowledge translation project Professor Kissane will lead over the next three years will have two objectives:

1. To identify patients who may have psycho-existential needs through the routine use of an assessment tool.
2. To roll out online and face-to-face educational workshops to train and upskill clinicians (nurses, physicians, psychosocial health providers) about how to explore and discuss psycho-existential symptoms, treat them or refer patients to where they can get help.

"Most people would be surprised to find that unrecognised psycho-existential suffering accounts for as many hospital admissions and extended lengths of stay as unmanaged physical symptoms," says Professor Kissane. "The assessment and management model our project group would be implementing seeks to intervene early, prevent hospitalisation, relieve suffering and enhance quality-of-life for patients nearing the end of their lives."

This project will be run in collaboration with organisations around the country, including St Vincent's in Brisbane and Sydney, Calvary palliative care services in NSW, Tasmania and ACT, Cabrini Health and Monash in Victoria, HammondCare in NSW, St John of God Health Care services in WA, Top End Services in Darwin and Flinders University services in SA.

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