BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE: In the last few years public interest in the care of severely ill and dying patients has been growing. The aim of palliative medicine is to improve the care of the dying. However, this is still not achieved in many general hospitals. The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) for the care of the dying intends to change this situation. The aim of this study was to explore the views of professionals using the LCP as a framework for ensuring good care of the dying. METHODS: A qualitative study was conducted with an interdisciplinary focus group of ten professionals (nurses, physicians, spiritual adviser, social worker, physiotherapist and art therapist) to explore their views and experience after implementation of the LCP in a palliative care unit (PCU). The recorded discussion between them was transcribed verbatim and analysed using content analysis by three independent reviewers. RESULTS: Seven nurses and three physicians with an average work experience of 16 years each took part in the focus group. Based on the experience of 24 patients, the LCP was evaluated as very positive by all participants. In particular, three aspects were emphasized as having high relevance for a good quality of care: improvement of self-confidence, better control of symptoms, and enhancement of the communication between professionals and with patients and their relatives. However, some weaknesses were also mentioned, e.g. inadequate effort of documenting the beginning of implementing the scheme. CONCLUSION: The LCP was well received by professionals after the initial implementation of the LCP in a German PCU. The LCP was judged as an appropriate and helpful framework in the care of the dying.

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