

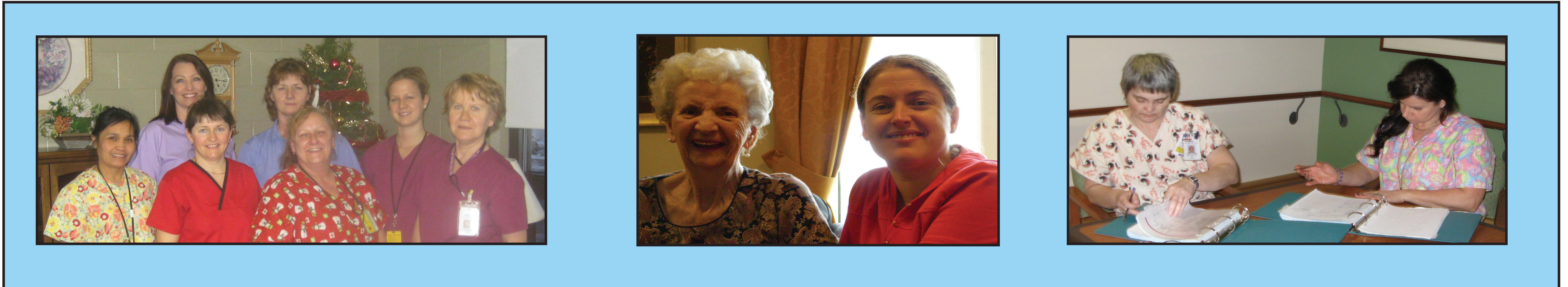
Personal Support Workers Perspective on Palliative Care in Long-Term Care

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Background

By the year 2020, it is estimated that as many as 39% of Long-term care residents will die each year in a LTC home. With LTC quickly becoming a major site of death in Canada, most LTC homes lack a formalized palliative care (PC) program to care for residents living with life-limiting or chronic illnesses.



Objective

Personal support workers (PSWs) provide 80% of direct care to LTC residents. A primary goal of a five year project entitled *Improving the Quality of Life of People Dying in Long Term Care Home* is to examine the role of PSWs in providing PC in LTC.

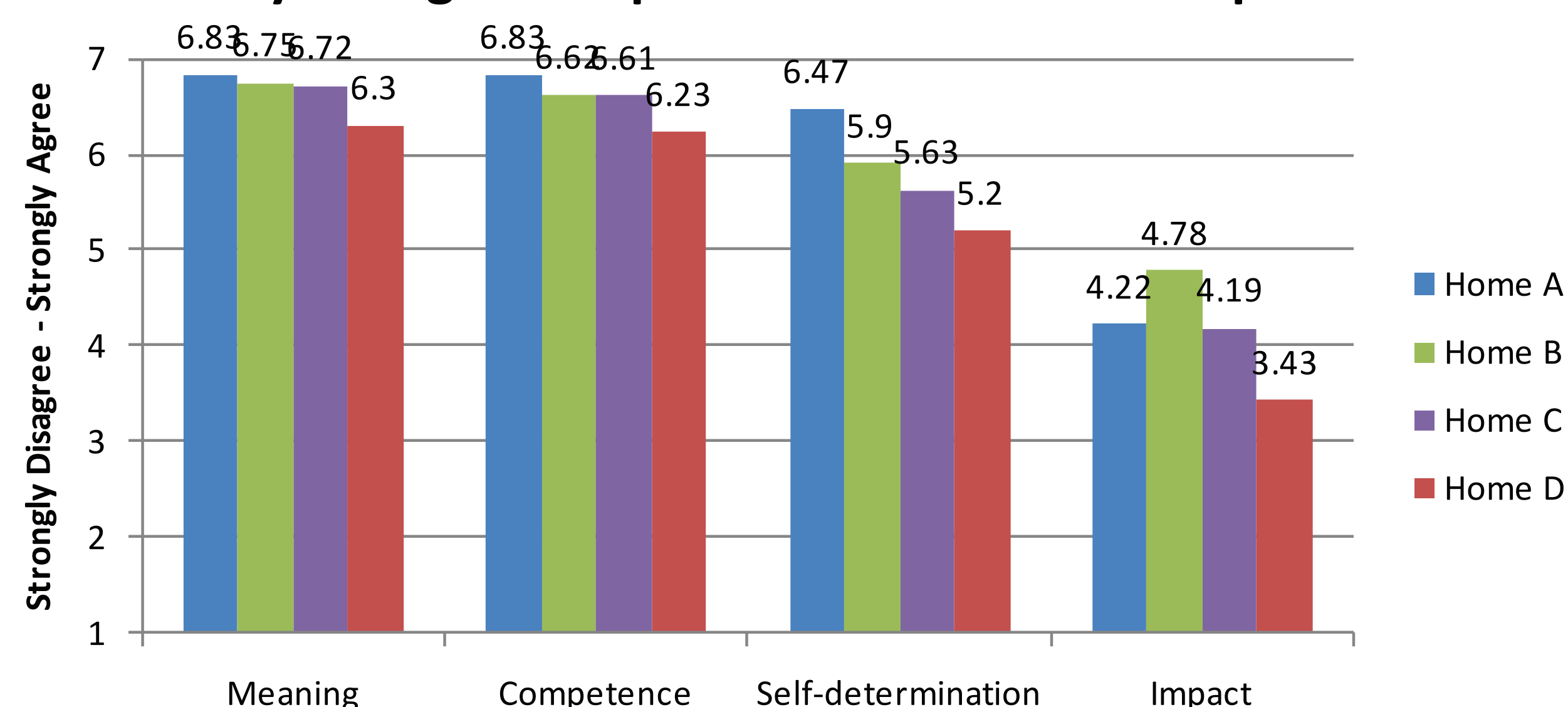
Methods

Participatory action research methodologies (PAR) were used in four Ontario LTC homes as part of an environmental scan. Focus groups (n=75) asked PSW's their perception of PC and quality-of-life in LTC while a survey (n=233) measured their level of empowerment in the workplace.

Survey Results

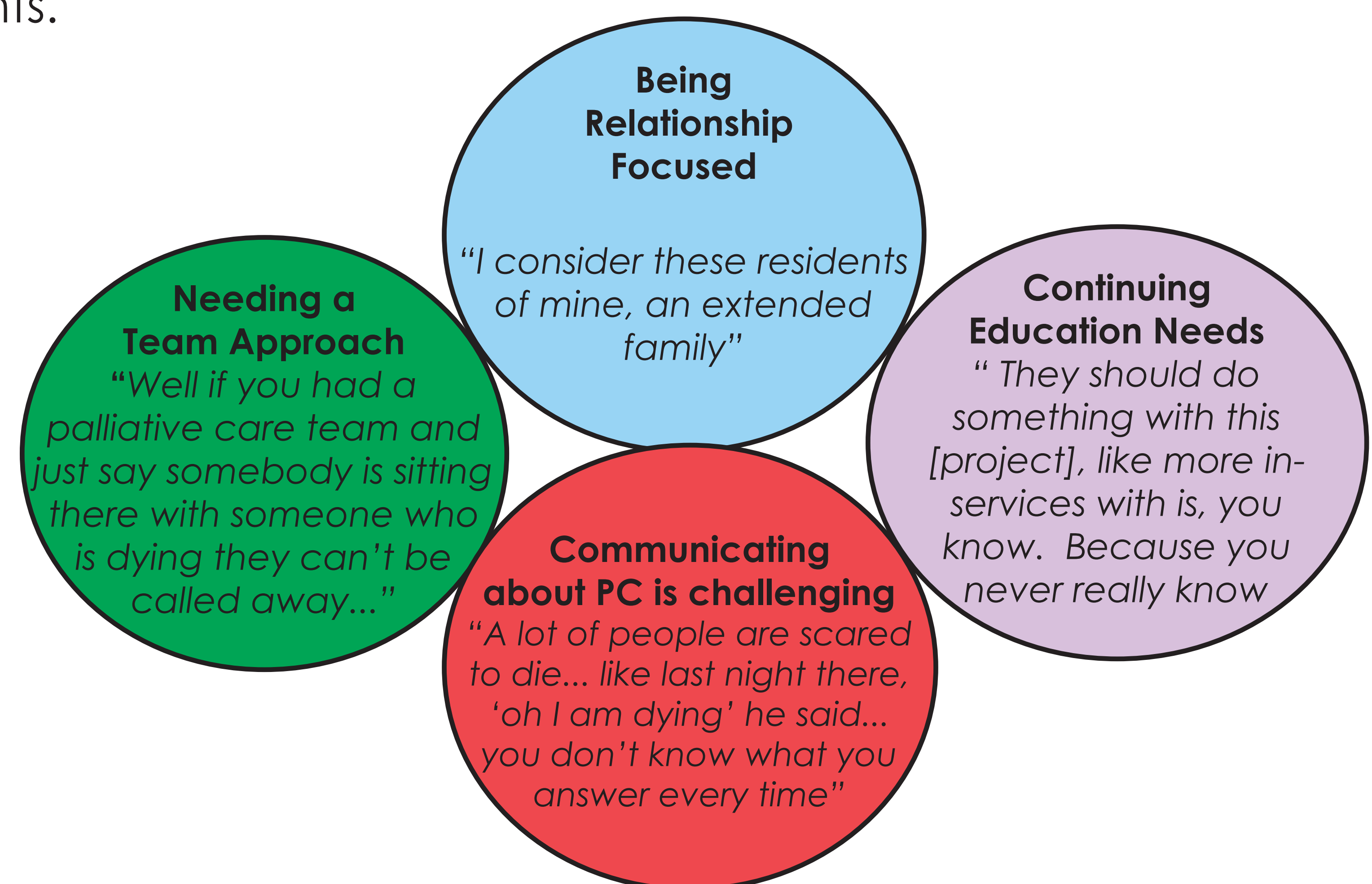
PSWs are being promoted as agents of change in the LTC homes as they provide the most contact with residents, but have the least power within the organization. The meaning they give to their work was rated highest in all homes, but the amount of impact they have in their organization was lowest in all four homes.

Psychological Empowerment in the Workplace



Focus Group Results

PSWs expressed clear education needs surrounding the provision of culturally competent care and current PC best practices. Communication was identified as a key challenge between the different disciplines regarding care planning and provision, and also talking with families about death and dying. The PSWs placed a strong emphasis on relationships as they valued the connection they make with families and residents.



Conclusion

Over 30 national and international researchers and 40 community organizations are partnered in this project. These partners will work collaboratively to establish interventions to address the educational needs of the PSWs working in LTC homes, help define the role of PSWs in PC and create an evidence based toolkit for developing PC for LTC homes that can be applied nationally.