



Preparing future doctors for providing end of life care: can a single afternoon session improve outcomes?

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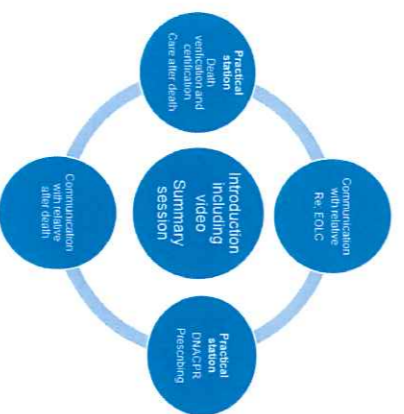
Introduction

Nearly every Foundation Doctor training in the UK will care for someone who is dying; 'End of Life Care' is even part of the Foundation Core Curriculum. Because of this, the ability to care for patients and their families at the end of life, "including management of symptoms, practical issues of law and certification, and effective communication" is a core requirement of the GMC Outcomes for Graduates¹. Additionally, NES and NHS Scotland Guidance highlight that communication around end of life care is an essential skill for newly qualified junior doctors². However, a recent survey has suggested that medical students feel unprepared for discussing and dealing with issues around death and dying³.

Our aim was to pilot a communication and practical skills session around end of life care to final year medical students assessing whether having a single, focused teaching session enabled them to feel more prepared for their future roles as junior doctors as highlighted by national policy.

Methods

Two teaching workshops were run in Spring 2017 at the University of Dundee, each lasting 2.5 hours in total. The sessions were based on the case of a patient with metastatic pancreatic cancer who enters the last days of life whilst an inpatient in hospital. The below diagram illustrates the components of the sessions:



Following each workshop, students were asked to complete a short survey assessing how useful they found the session and whether they felt more prepared in caring for the dying following it.

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References

1. General Medical Council (2015) *Outcomes for Graduates (Tomorrow's Doctors)*: page 5
2. NHS Scotland (2014) *Guidance: Caring for people in their last days and hours of life*
3. General Medical Council (2016) 'GMC calls for more support for doctors in care of the dying', *General Medical Council*. 15 May [Online]. Available at <https://www.gmc-uk.org/news/28655.asp> (Accessed 27 October 2017)

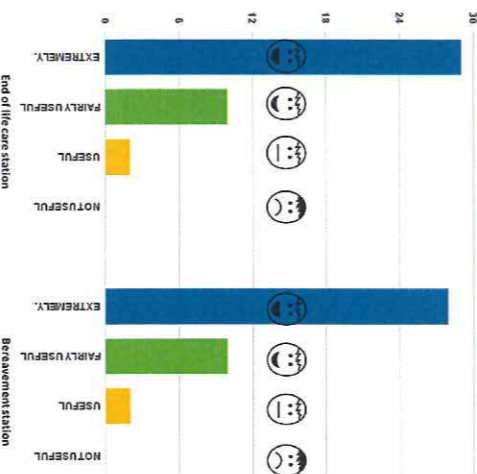
Results

A total of 47 students attended both sessions (19 for the first session, 28 for the second session) and we received written feedback from 41 students (87% completion rate). All respondents agreed that the workshops helped them feel prepared to care for people who are dying and their relatives. Over 95% of students felt that both communication skills stations were fairly or extremely useful, and over 90% of students felt that the practical stations were fairly or extremely useful. The graphs below breakdown the feedback received:

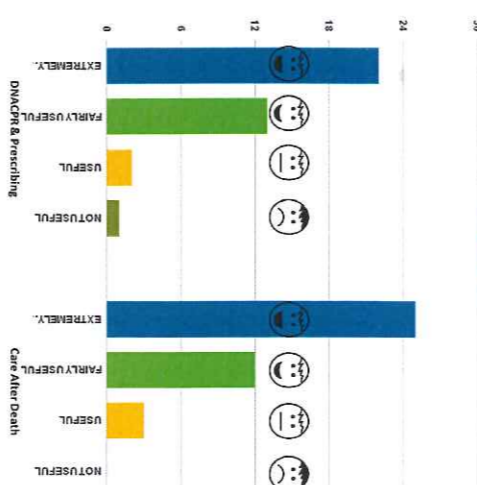
This workshop has helped to prepare me for caring for people who are dying and their families



How useful did you find the communication stations?



How useful did you find the practical stations?



Key Themes From Feedback

1. Confidence building
2. Learned new skills
3. Not covered elsewhere in the curriculum
4. Practical aspects of death and dying
5. Feel more prepared for Foundation Training

Conclusions

Our feedback shows that final year medical students view teaching around end of life care as an important part of their learning experience and that it would be welcomed if included in their training.

After the success of this pilot session, we have now integrated this teaching session into the final year curriculum at the University of Dundee Medical School with plans to further develop it by exploring alternative resources both locally and nationally.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the communication skills tutors, palliative care doctors, foundation doctors and actors/simulated patients who devoted their time to helping us deliver our pilot sessions. We would also like to thank Karen Lambie for assisting in the running of sessions and collating the feedback data.

For More Information

If you would like to know more about our pilot or new curriculum sessions, both Dr. Ramsey and Dr. Paterson are available to discuss at the conference. Alternatively, please email at allie.ramsey@nhs.net