In the End it Does Matter: Assessment of End of Life Care Communication Skills in Medical Students

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Background
Proficiency in end of life (EOL) discussions with patients is a crucial skill necessary for all physicians. However, little is known about the knowledge and training of medical students in this important aspect of medical education, and whether a standardized approach to pedagogy would be beneficial.

Objectives
1. Assess medical student’s baseline experience with EOL discussions
2. Evaluate student’s knowledge, attitudes, and confidence towards EOL discussions
3. Develop and Implement a workshop to teach a structured checklist approach to facilitate EOL discussions.

Methods
A one hour workshop was conducted during the student clinical year involving Internal Medicine clerkship, with assessments completed directly before and after the session.

Pre-Intervention Assessment
1. How much would you like to know about your condition and treatment? (1 = Only the basics, 5 = All the details)
2. How would you like decisions regarding your treatment be made? (1 = Leave it to the doctor, 5 = I want to be involved)
3. Look at your answers. What kind of role do you want to have in the decision making process?
4. In terms of physical and mental ability, it is acceptable to receive treatment...
   a. I am aware of my condition and health status
   b. I have had formal training on how to communicate the importance of advance care planning
   c. I have had formal training on how to have end-of-life care or advance care planning discussions with patients

Post-Intervention Assessment
1. What are your main concerns about having conversations with your patients about end of life care?
2. Didactic: In the End it Does Matter: Assessment of End of Life Care Communication Skills in Medical Students

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline Experiences with EOL Discussions</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention Assessment</td>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How much would you like to know about your condition and treatment? (1 = Only the basics, 5 = All the details)</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How would you like decisions regarding your treatment be made? (1 = Leave it to the doctor, 5 = I want to be involved)</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Look at your answers. What kind of role do you want to have in the decision making process?</td>
<td>35%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 4. In terms of physical and mental ability, it is acceptable to receive treatment...
   a. I am aware of my condition and health status | 5% |
| b. I have had formal training on how to communicate the importance of advance care planning | 15% |
| c. I have had formal training on how to have end-of-life care or advance care planning discussions with patients | 20% |

Conclusion
• Medical students recognize the importance of EOL care planning.
• Most students have not had prior formal training in this area and are not comfortable having conversations about EOL care.
• After a one hour workshop, which included a standardized approach to EOL conversations, students demonstrated an increased confidence in multiple aspects of skills and knowledge regarding EOL care planning discussions.
• There is likely an important role for an emphasis on EOL care communication skills within medical school curricula.

Future Directions
• Plans to survey students to assess whether skills learned in the workshop were utilized during subsequent rotations.
• Feedback from workshop revealed students desire for further sessions incorporating other educational modalities.

References