

End-of-life care Communication: Developing an Educational Package for Critical Care Nurses

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Abbreviated abstract: Families who experience the death of a loved one in critical care are often required to make a rapid shift in their expectations from supportive therapies and recovery to palliation. The families of patients that die in the critical care setting may experience long-term psychological distress when compared to other bereaved families. Developing nurses' confidence through a bespoke educational package is one intervention, of a wider Quality Improvement project, designed to improve the quality of bereavement care experienced by family members who experience the death of a loved in critical care.

Previous work, challenge, and approach

Critical care nurses play a crucial role communicating with and supporting families during end-of-life care. Accordingly, the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh Critical Care Bereavement Team set a specific Quality Improvement objective; “To introduce a bespoke educational programme for critical care nurses to support communication with family members during end-of-life care and after death”.

In May and June 2021, nurses in a 42-bedded critical care unit were invited to complete a survey designed to understand better their experiences when providing during end-of-life care over the previous 6-months.
77-nurses (approx 33%) responded.

- More than half of the participants reported not feeling adequately prepared to confidently perform their role in end-of-life communication.
- A lack of confidence communicating with relatives was identified as a factors contributing to lower confidence scores.

“I’d like training to know I’m saying the right thing”

“Need for practice with supervision to build confidence”

“I feel worried I accidentally end up causing more upset to the families.”

“COVID has changed the way we communicate with relatives”

Strategy: Develop a webinar to improve nurses’ confidence when communicating with patients and their families during end-of-life care.

Techniques and Methods

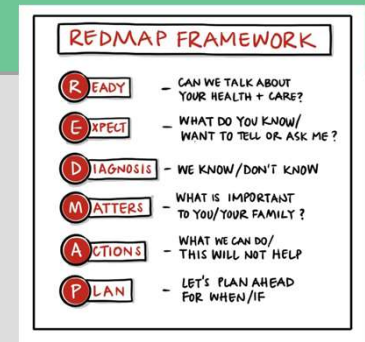
An interactive, scenario-based end-of-life communication webinar was developed in collaboration with the 'Effective Communication for Healthcare' NHS Scotland group.

The scenario was developed by the critical care bereavement team, based on their clinical experiences.

- Delivery: Via Zoom
- Nurses observed a conversation between an actor-nurse and actor-relative.
- Participants were encouraged to contribute comments/suggestions via the live 'chat' function.
- Facilitated discussion: how the REDMAP framework can be useful to critical care communications. Discussed how observed communication styles could be applied to the nurses future practice.

- Pre and post-webinar surveys were designed to assess whether the webinar impacted the self-reported confidence of critical care nurses when communicating with families during end-of-life care
- Acceptability of the webinar was assessed in the post-webinar survey

Participants were asked to have access to and be familiar with the REDMAP tool prior to the webinar



<https://www.spict.org.uk/red-map/>

Results and Conclusions

- 21 critical care nurses attended and completed pre/post-webinar surveys
- The webinar was identified by all attendees to be either '**excellent**' or '**very good**'.
- There was an **overall improvement in all survey questions** pertaining to confidence.
- **76% of nurses reported intention to modify their practice** by developing a **calm/ honest/ structured approach** to their future communications.

- Findings support the development of content for future webinars to meet the needs identified by ICU nurses.
- The QI team intend to repeat the survey 2-months post-webinar, to assess confidence following opportunity to apply the webinar content to clinical practice.
- The post-webinar results will be used to guide the iterative development of educational resources to increase the confidence and expertise of critical care nurses in end-of-life communication skills.
- **Through developing the programme it is hoped that the family experience during end-of-life care and bereavement may be enhanced.**

This is part of Bereavement Quality Improvement project supported by the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

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