

Palliative Care Forum: an opportunity for learning and multi-disciplinary reflection

Dr Jack Maddicks, Dr Cat Holligan, Dr Colette Reid
NHS Lothian, Scotland, UK

Abbreviated abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on hospital staff. Increased emphasis on anticipatory care planning, redeployment to new departments, and rapidly evolving clinical guidance have generated high levels of stress. In response, the Palliative Care Forum was launched in May 2020 to provide a space for multi-disciplinary education, discussion and reflection on important topics and difficult experiences. Sessions included DNACPR, breathlessness, recognising dying and anticipatory prescribing, and feedback was collected using pre- and post-session questionnaires.

References: 1. Hopkins S A, Lovick R, Polak L, Bowers B, Morgan T, Kelly M P et al. Reassessing advance care planning in the light of covid-19 BMJ 2020. 2. O'Dowd A. NHS staff's stress levels rose last year as covid pandemic took its toll BMJ 2021. 3. Brighton LJ et al. 'Difficult Conversations': evaluation of multiprofessional training. BMJ Support Palliat Care. 2018. 4. Cook DA. Twelve tips for evaluating educational programs. Med Teach. 5. Selman L, Robinson V, Klass L, Khan S, George R, Shepherd K, Burman R, Koffman J. Improving confidence and competence of healthcare professionals in end-of-life care: an evaluation of the 'Transforming End of Life Care' course at an acute hospital trust. BMJ Support Palliat Care. 2016.

Background and methods

Background

Covid-19 has had a profound impact on hospital staff.

An emphasis on anticipatory care planning;¹ redeployment to unfamiliar settings, and rapidly evolving clinical guidance have generated high levels of stress.² In response to this, the Palliative Care Forum was created to provide space for multidisciplinary education, discussion and reflection on difficult topics and experiences.

Session themes included management of breathlessness, DNACPR, anticipatory medications and recognising dying.

Format

Lecture

20 minutes of teaching shared over MS Teams at all 3 NHS Lothian main hospital sites

Discussion and Reflection

40 minutes in-person conversation on experiences relating to the session theme, facilitated by an expert at each site

Closure and feedback

Brief regroup over MS Teams to summarise discussions

Feedback

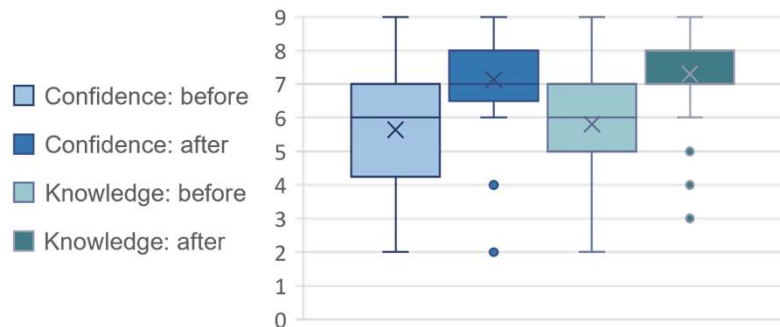
- Feedback was collected using mixed-method questionnaires before and after each session^{3, 4, 5}
- Quantitative questions included:
 - Self-assess knowledge and confidence in each topic
 - Likelihood to recommend the session to a friend
- Questions with free-text answers included:
 - Reasons for attending and desired learning outcomes
 - Main learning points from the session
 - Desired future topics

Results

Quantitative results



Of the 30 attendees who provided feedback, there were **19 FY1s**, **9 other doctors**, **7 nurses** and **2 AHPs**.



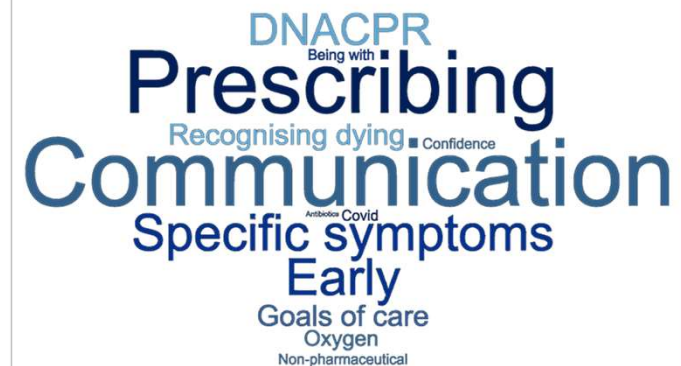
Average increase in both knowledge and confidence between pre- and post-session surveys was 1.6.
8.3 out of 9 was the average score for likelihood to recommend the forum to a colleague.

Qualitative results



The most popular desired learning outcomes were DNACPR, communication, and prescribing.

Attendees most reported learning on themes of communication, prescribing and early discussion of palliative themes.



Discussion and conclusions

Discussion

Successes

- Attendees enjoyed the forum, and that it helped increase their knowledge and confidence
- Participants who attended more than once reported noticeable changes in their clinical practice
- The forum adapted well to cover commonly-requested topics

Challenges

- The MDT was not well represented, with half of attendees being FY1 Doctors
- The attendance at the sessions was not always well represented in quantity of feedback

The future

- The forum in 2021-2 will again include DNACPR, a session with a bereaved relative, and responses to requests for topics
- Sessions will now be focussed on doctors in training to enable more directed advertising and session content
- Alternative educational forums will be arranged for other MDT members

