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A NEW COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PALLIATIVE CARE FELLOW-PHYSICIANS

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This presentation describes a novel educational program associated with a Palliative Care Post-Graduate Medical Fellowship embedded within a university teaching hospital. The educational objectives of this program will be presented, as will the pedagogical methods and initial trainee responses to this program.

Grounded in both an action-reflection model, as well as the discrimination model of clinical supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009), the objective of this new program is to help physicians develop their clinical skills in understanding and negotiating the complex psychosocial issues associated with advanced cancer care. Secondary objectives include developing increased self-awareness in the domains of death, dying, bereavement and supportive counselling. This program was constructed in parallel with the learning objectives of two Canadian accreditation bodies in Palliative Medicine and was drawn on an established Spiritual Care pedagogical method for tertiary health care settings (Lambert, 2013).

Training includes two 90 minute bi-monthly meetings, comprising either a verbatim case report or a reflective practice group. In the former, medical fellows presented a case to a peer-group that centered largely on psychological and not medical issues. Fellows receive feedback on their communication skills,

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as well as on case conceptualization and treatment planning. Trainees also participate in a reflective practice group to provide an additional opportunity to deepen self-awareness, as well as reflect on how their attitudes, values and assumptions affect the role of a palliative care physician. The presentation will also report initial trainee responses to the program based on exit interviews. This training model can also easily be transferred to the training of various health care disciplines associated with palliative care. Considerations for adjustment of the program to other practice settings will be encouraged from attendees. The syllabus for the program will be provided upon request.

Pedagogical methods

A didactic approach will be used to outline the basic structure of the program. To illustrate the intersections of theory and practice, the workshop will include presentations of several group case vignettes. Participants will be invited to provide feedback on the potential strengths and limitations of this program.

Expected outcomes

People attending this workshop will obtain practical information concerning a new communication skills training program, as well as techniques and strategies they may wish to bring to their particular practice setting. This training model can also easily be transferred to the training of various health care disciplines associated with palliative care.■