



# Closing the Palliative Care Skills Gap by Providing Palliative Care Seminars for Physician Assistant Students

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## Statement of the Problem

- There is a shortage of palliative care providers: one for every 6,369 people 65+ years of age.
- Primary care providers, including physician assistants (PA), need basic palliative care skills.

## Background

Students with exposure to palliative care education feel more equipped to care for the dying patient. Accreditation standards for PA education require preclinical instruction on palliative and end-of-life care, but specifies no core competencies.

## Objectives

1. To introduce PA students to principles of palliative care through a mandatory seminar.
2. To demonstrate increased student comfort and competence implementing palliative care principles and goals-of-care conversations.

## Methods

Mandatory 6-hour, 3-part seminar with 30 students at Francis Marion University in Florence, SC on November 21, 2017

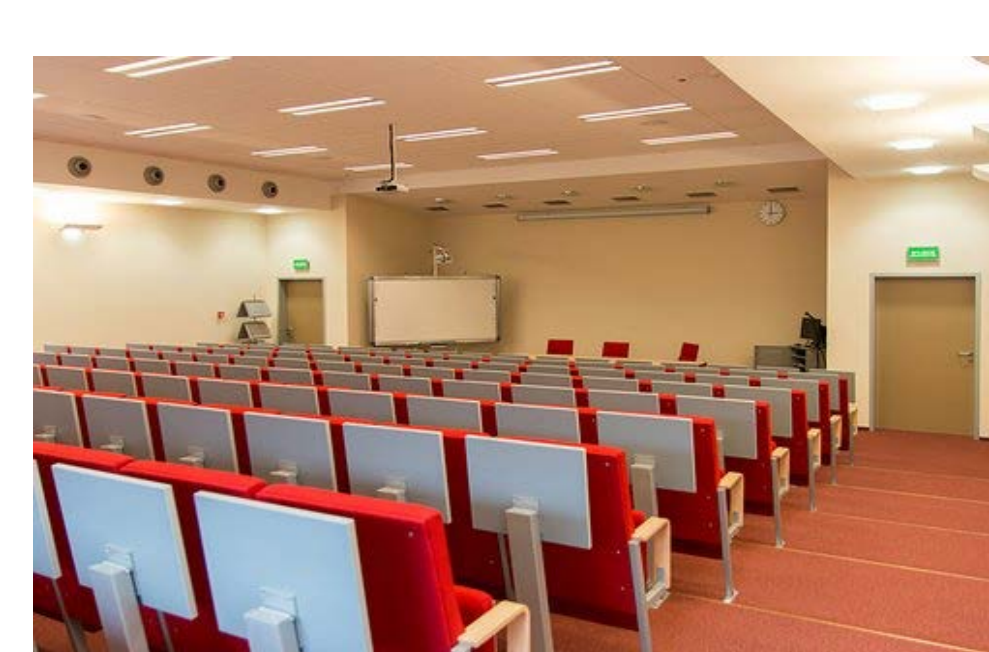
### Death Cafe



#### Talk About Death

- Most fascinating thing?
- Scariest thing?

### Palliative Lecture



#### Lecture Overview

- Goals of PC/team
- Identifying patients
- Advance directives
- Shared decision making/capacity

### Reader's Theater



#### Role Play with Script

- Brief lecture, SPIKES, Ask-Tell-Ask
- Role play with scripted conversations

Frommelt's Attitude Toward Care of the Dying Scale Form-B (FATCOD) was given at seminar, "look-back," "now," and after six months of clinical rotations.

Students' paired t tests were used to analyze data.

## Results

Statistically significant attitude changes occurred in 9 of 30 FATCOD questions the day of seminar

There was "movement" on all questions

One student rotated with a hospice and palliative care physician

"This was very informative and helped with some of my own fears"

"I want to do palliative care"

After 6 months of clinical rotations, attitude changes were significant on 4 of the FATCOD questions

## Clinical Implications

PA students' attitudes changed after the seminar (9/30); however the changes were not sustainable over time (4/30)

Consider integrating palliative care principles into courses already in place. Alternatively, design a palliative care course for the curriculum

Qualitative data suggests students feel more comfortable talking to patients about death and dying after the seminar

Role play and general conversations about death and dying are beneficial and should be included in PA school curricula

Based on informal student feedback, the seminar was helpful and well received

Present data to key stakeholders at FMU to work toward incorporating formal palliative care education into the PA program

## Limitations

- Seminar was the day before Thanksgiving break
- A great deal of information was presented at once
- Did not do a true "pre" assessment
- Unable to match all post surveys with originals due to some students not using unique identifier

## Acknowledgements/References

Mentor: F. Amos Bailey, MD

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