

How do you manage differences of opinion amongst your team regarding patient care management?

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BACKGROUND

The importance of effective teamwork in healthcare settings is highlighted in policies such as the National Consensus Statement essential elements for safe and high-quality end-of-life care¹ and the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards² developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (The Commission).

End-of-Life Essentials (EOLE) is developed from The Commissions work and is a government funded project which aims to provide evidence-based online education on end-of-life care, for doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals who work in acute hospitals. 'Teams and Continuity for the Patient' features in the suite of EOLE modules and includes education around essential elements of effective teamwork in end-of-life care.³ The aim of this study was to explore module learner views on managing differences of opinion amongst staff regarding patient care management.

METHODS

Participants were learners (health professionals) who registered to the EOLE website and engaged with the Teams module. Learner responses to the question posed at the end of the module 'How do you manage differences of opinion amongst staff regarding patient care management?' were extracted for a 12-month period. Qualitative data from 293 learners were analysed thematically in NVivo 12, guided by an overarching theoretical framework.⁵



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RESULTS

Our analysis revealed four overarching themes:

1. Team collaboration

"We collaborate and have multi disciplinary meetings and discuss the options available"

"Create a psychologically safe, respectful environment in which all views are heard"

"work together to reach a common goal/outcome for the patient"

2. Communication skills and emotional awareness

"open, honest and constructive communication"

"Active listening"

"find a non-judgmental way to respond and reframe from emotionally charged responses"

"Listen with empathy"

3. Prioritising the patient

"align with patients values"

"have clarity re goals of care"

"advocate when needed."

4. Capacity-building and structure

"Looking up best practice and applying if necessary"

"Seek clarity regarding roles of team members"

STRENGTHENING HEALTHCARE TEAMS:

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➤ Active listening

Amongst other things, our results highlighted the importance of fostering active listening as a skill for healthcare professionals,⁶ not just when communicating with patients, but also as part of team collaboration, discussion, and negotiation.

➤ Psychological safety

Our results also highlighted the importance of building a psychologically safe workplace within acute healthcare settings. Psychological safety is the belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up about their ideas, concerns, questions, or mistakes.⁷ A high-functioning team creates an atmosphere of psychological safety.⁷

REFERENCES

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