

End-of-Life Care Seminar – Recognising Dying

Group discussions:

1. Think about all the patients in your care during your last shift. Ask yourself the ‘surprise’ question about each patient. The ‘surprise’ question is: *Would you be surprised if this patient dies within the next few months/weeks/days?* Is it time to initiate a conversation about end-of-life care? Is this routinely implemented in your clinical practice setting? If not, how do you raise this within your team?
2. What prevents you from having early conversations about patient goals and values? How would you go about it?
3. What psychosocial and spiritual support services are available in your clinical area? How can you involve these in your patients’ care?
4. Think about one patient that died recently on your ward or unit. Was their death expected by the team? Was the death discussed or audited? What is the one thing that you learnt about that death that will change your practice tomorrow?
5. What are the barriers for you and your team when it comes to identifying end of life? What may assist in overcoming these barriers?
6. Sometimes, healthcare professionals do not raise end-of-life issues with patients and families because they do not wish to ‘cause sadness’ or get things wrong. Prognosis can be very tricky to estimate. Families often ask questions like, ‘How long does mum have?’. Talk with a colleague about how you respond to these questions and if you could use ‘uncertainty’ in introducing end-of-life care.
7. Have you discussed dying with a patient or family? What went better than expected? What was a challenge? What advice can you give others?
8. Can you say the word dying when talking with patients or families?

