

Submitting Author: Matthew Ellman MD
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Poster Title

Implementation and Evaluation of a Four-Year Integrated Palliative and End-of-Life Care Curriculum for Medical Students

Authors

Matthew S. Ellman MD , Auguste H. Fortin, VI MD, Andrew Putnam MD, Margaret Bia MD

Abstract

Background: Despite mandates for end-of-life (EoL) care education, graduating medical students do not consistently feel prepared to provide this care. We sought to create, implement and evaluate a longitudinal, integrated four-year curriculum to teach EoL care skills at the Yale School of Medicine.

Methods: Developmental learning objectives informed teaching strategies including: panel discussions; observations of interviews; role plays; online modules; simulation workshops; standardized patients; written reflections and case conferences. We incorporated interprofessional learning and spiritual/cultural aspects of care. Technologic enhancements included a curriculum website and blended learning with online modules and workshops. A mixed method evaluation of the curriculum included: analyses of student written reflections; graduating student surveys; and demonstration of students' competency in palliative care with a newly developed OSCE.

Results: Analyses of student written reflections demonstrated meaningful learning engagement. Graduating student surveys showed that 2011 graduates who participated in the full curriculum felt more prepared in all domains of EoL care than earlier graduates who did not. Results from the AAMC questionnaire of 2013 graduates showed that only 4% of Yale and 19% of other medical school graduates felt that their instruction was inadequate in palliative care and pain management. Finally, third year students scored a mean of 75% on the palliative care OSCE indicating overall competency in primary palliative care.

Conclusions: A 4-year longitudinal integrated curriculum enhances students' skills and preparedness in EoL care. Proven and adaptable educational strategies will be useful to address the mandate to improve EoL care education. Teaching strategies and components of this curriculum can be adapted to other programs.