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Poster Title

Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of an End-of-Life Care Online Module for Preclinical Students

Authors

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Abstract

Background

In order to prepare medical students for bedside learning in the care of patients with terminal and advanced illness, education in the principles and practices of palliative and hospice medicine is best initiated in the pre-clinical years. Online tools have been shown to be an effective, flexible method in diverse areas of medical education.

Aims

To explore the application of an online learning tool in conjunction with a hospice clinical experience in the educating medical students, a 30-minute interactive online module was created with the following learning objectives:

1. To articulate the qualifications for and the services provided by hospice care
2. To recognize the stages of active dying and identify the accompanying physiological changes
3. To list five common end-of-life symptoms and differentiate their pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment options

Methods

The online module was piloted with 152 second-year medical students in 2012-2014. Students were randomly assigned to the complete the online module or not (control group) prior attending the required half-day hospice clinical experience and then completed a knowledge- and attitude-assessing questionnaire.

Results

Students who completed the online module prior to the hospice experience scored higher on multiple choice questions pertaining to hospice and palliative care ($p < 0.05$, multivariate ANOVA) but their attitudes were similar to those who did not complete the online module. Overall, the students felt somewhat uncomfortable caring for dying patients even though they regard it as a physician's duty, and that palliative/hospice care education is important in medical school.

Discussion

When combined with a mentored clinical hospice experience, an online module appears to enhance teaching of the dying process and terminal care to pre-clinical medical students. A new online learning module may prove useful to integrate in curricula in other institutions

References

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