

Promoting staff wellbeing during COVID-19

This extract from a forthcoming report on learning from deaths across the 15 Academic Health Science Networks and Patient Safety Collaboratives provides reflections on promoting staff wellbeing and some examples of good practice.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the more psychologically safe a staff group are, the more effective and productive they are and the higher the quality of care they deliver to patients (NHS Patient Safety Strategy 2019). Conversely, poor mental wellbeing and high levels of stress link to poorer safety outcomes.

The NHS Staff and Learners' Mental Wellbeing Commission report (HEE 2019) focuses on the wellbeing of the NHS learners and workforce. It notes that of the 1.3 million people in the NHS workforce, many work in frontline healthcare and, 'see the horrors of extreme trauma; they see the aftermath of major road traffic accidents, suicide, and they see children in distress or dying and they help families cope with the loss of a loved one.'

The Interim NHS People Plan (2019) recognises that in order to maintain a healthy workforce, leaders must value, support, develop and invest in staff and pay attention to people's health and wellbeing.

We asked staff about the types of and access to support they received after a death. Many had access to a number of options for support, recognising different staff preferences and needs. Examples of best practice included reflective, supportive forums which were prioritised, responsive and supported by senior leaders. Other areas described an absence of support or services that were available being inconsistent or inaccessible.

When speaking about the culture they worked in and the support that was available, staff were open about their own wellbeing. They recognised the resilience required to support people at the end of their lives and to be in such close proximity to high levels of trauma and distress. Whilst recognising that supporting patients sitting with the distress of a bereaved family can be a real privilege the significant impact on mental wellbeing often went unrecognised.

'The brutal reality is that after a death, the next patient arrives – no time for thinking.' Paediatric nurse, ITU

'Does it have a cost when someone dies? Yes, it does.' Consultant, ITU

'We are not invincible, just because we are wearing a uniform.' Paramedic

Best practice examples

Promote staff wellbeing: to ensure that staff feel valued and that their wellbeing is promoted when there is death.

Reflective Practice Templates – Living Well

To support staff learning a reflective template is used which focuses on seven core capabilities at the end of life and encourages staff to reflect on how confident they felt with these and what made it both easier and harder to achieve them.

The template was developed by Dr Saskie Dorman, consultant in palliative care at **Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust** and Andi Stone, specialist palliative care nurse, as part of *Results through relationships* - a collaboration between NHS Dorset CCG, NHSE personalised care group, Dorset End of Life Care Partnership, Andy Brogan at Easier Inc, the Poole Locality MDT and the local community. The template has been used to structure shared reflective practice which has changed the focus of conversations, supporting learning and collaboration.

Support for staff: Learning from Excellence

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust have a section within their morbidity and mortality meetings (M and M): Awesome and Amazing (A and A). A simple idea to learn, share and celebrate good practice.

Culture of support : Gosport Learning and Assurance Board

Gosport Learning and Assurance Board was established by the **Hampshire and IOW CCG Partnership** response to the Publication of the Gosport Independent Panel Report (2018). There were a number of key themes identified: listening to and learning from staff and patients concerns, medicines management, partnership working, clinical oversight, effective team working, quality of information – using what we know, excellence in the care of older people and end-of-life Care. A charter of cultural commitments was designed to represent the learning.



Accessible, flexible support: Schwartz rounds

Schwartz rounds are used by trusts to support staff to reflect on the impact their practice has on themselves and to help them provide compassionate care.

Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust have embedded Schwartz rounds into their trust culture. Mobile Schwartz rounds are offered to staff who are unable to attend at a conventional time/location, a variety of professions are represented each time and feedback is extremely positive.

Opportunity for reflection: staff feedback

Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust have developed a postcard to encourage staff to share their reflections about a death. This has not only shaped learning, as it is considering as part of the mortality review but also can highlight if staff might need some support.

Staff support

WARD: Well and Resilient Doctors was founded in 2017 in Bristol but is now operating throughout the **Severn Deanery** in order to provide wellbeing and mental health support to junior doctors. It was started due to concerns that the system was not focusing on staff wellbeing and with the aim of teaching things they wish they had known, a small group of registrars set up a programme of workshops covering topics such as safe reflection, mindfulness, and physical health. There is time after the workshop for people to stay and talk.

These local teams form a larger regional support and wellbeing network that learn from each other and improve the workshops and support available to all junior doctors. This is also important because as every junior doctor moves throughout the deanery, local support services differ but at least one thing will remain solid – there will always be WARD to help support and guide. The project has a set of principles:

- Be kind and helpful
- Look out for your colleagues
- Stop and ask twice

With the aim being that these core principles/values become embedded within junior doctor practice to try to improve the culture amongst doctors and the NHS.

| Theme | Link | Organisation | Format |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Child bereavement | Talking with bereaved families of children | NHS / SANDS | Paper |
| Communication | Dying is not as bad as you think | BBC | Video online |
| Decision making | Deciding right | Northern Cancer Alliance | Website |
| End of life conversations | Video: Talking about death and dying Booklet: Let's talk about death and dying | Age UK | Video on YouTube Booklet |
| End of life conversations | Let's talk about death | Association of American Medical Colleges | Article |
| End of life conversations | What matters to you? | What matters? | Website |
| End of life conversations | Being conversation ready white paper | Institution for Healthcare Improvement | Paper |
| End of life conversations | Conversation starter kit | Institution for Healthcare Improvement | Paper |
| End of life conversations | <i>With the End in Mind: Dying, Death, and Wisdom in an Age of Denial.</i> Book containing exemplar conversations at end of life | Kathryn Mannix | Book |
| Organisational culture | Just Culture | Sidney Dekker | Video on YouTube |
| Organisational culture | Just Culture: Short course 1 - Introduction | Sidney Dekker | Video on YouTube |
| Organisational culture | Just Culture: Short course 2 – Retribution | Sidney Dekker | Video on YouTube |

| Theme | Link | Organisation | Format |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Organisational culture | Just Culture: Short Course 3 – Restoration | Sidney Dekker | Video on YouTube |
| Organisational culture | Just Culture: Short course 4 – Second Victims | Sidney Dekker | Video on YouTube |
| Reporting | Learning from Excellence: Resources | Learning from Excellence | Website |
| Resilience | Support Around Death, NHS Education for Scotland | NHS Education for Scotland | Website |
| Resilience | Training resources: building resilience, promoting wellbeing | Mind | Presentation |
| Resilience | Resilience: A framework supporting hospice staff to flourish in stressful times | Hospice UK | Framework |
| Resilience | How do doctors and nurses cope when a patient dies? | BBC | Video on YouTube |
| Resilience | Amandip Sidhu: Doctors are dying of stigma | BMJ | Article |
| Suicide | Support after death by suicide | NHS | Booklet |