

Brief Grief Debriefs for Medicine Residents

January-June 2024

Lauren Phinney
Chloe Cattle
Alyssa Perez



Overview

A needs assessment of Internal Medicine residents at UCSF demonstrated a lack of protected time or space to process grief experienced at work. This intervention aimed to create more resident led programming with a monthly noon conference at three inpatient sites dedicated to debriefing for residents. Session content fulfilled one of four categories: end of life care education, grief processing, remembrance and gratitude, and diastole (activities that promote relaxation and community)

Data Snapshot

- 18 1 hour long sessions were held over 6 months. Average attendance was 15 residents and students per session
- Approximately 120 individual Internal Medicine residents participated in sessions
- 71 residents filled out a post session survey with overall increased perceived support

Resources

[UCSF Internal Medicine Wellbeing Committee](#)

[Massage by Design](#)

Project Details

Monthly noon conferences were held at each site over 6 months. Sessions included a component of reflection activity as well as a didactic component related to end-of-life care or grief processing. Guest speakers were invited from palliative care and intensive care. Sessions included:

- How to lead goals of care discussions with Palliative Care and ICU attendings
- ICU patient memorial
- Card making and gratitude practices
- Medical humanities panel series
- Origami Crane memorial project
- Spiritual assessment didactics with chaplains
- Massage therapy, Pet therapy, Yoga, Painting with Bob Ross, community coffee corner
- Gift cards incentives for participation were provided randomly to participants

Project Challenges

Due to the multi-site intervention and large size of the residency, project challenges included coordinating session times and content with stakeholders at each site. Participation in noon conference is also challenging due to clinical duties, which is alleviated best when attendings hold resident pagers to encourage protected learning and wellbeing time.

Lessons Learned

For optimal debriefing sessions, residents must have protected time to participate during the work day. Residents enjoy opportunities to build community, having space for structured debriefs, learning from experts in palliative care and grief processing, and getting massages and pet therapy.

Illustrative Quotes

- "I would like dedicated time for all interns for processing grief, as a class and individually. It needs to be built in time that still manages to feel authentic and meaningful."
- "The most helpful part was the informal nature, the layout of the room and the excellent facilitators"
- "I liked space to discuss tips and struggles running goals of care conversations"

End of life care Education

- How to conduct a spiritual assessment
- Cultural humility in goals of care

Grief Processing

- Narrative medicine
- How to lead a debrief
- Coping with mistakes in medicine

Remembrance and Gratitude

- Annual patient memorial
- Collaborative art creation

Diastole

- Protected time for togetherness
- Massage painting, pet therapy, yoga

