Exploring Palliative Care Team Communication: An Interprofessional Simulation Study

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Background
Providing end of life (EOL) care is a vital skill for every member of a healthcare team and required careful team communication. Many new graduates feel underprepared to provide EOL care and communicate in teams. Education on EOL care needed so all patients receive acceptable care.

Purpose
Determine how an interprofessional simulation fosters communication between healthcare student teams.

Simulation Design
Participants: 7-8 Nursing students, 1-2 Social Work students, & 1-2 Medical residents or students
Family members portrayed by actors; Patient portrayed by manikin
All students participated in a pre-briefing and a debriefing
Small groups acted in phases while others watched via live stream
Team members assigned tasks within professional scopes of practice
Simulation duration: 1-1.5 hours (varied by semester)

Methods
Simulations conducted over three semesters (Fall 2017- Fall 2018)
Each simulation video recorded
Two trained research assistants viewed the videos independently
Team communication assessed via Gap Kalamazoo Communication Skills Assessment Form
Evaluated 9 domains of team communication (poor to excellent)
Evaluations discussed and discrepancies resolved

Results
Communication scores reflected fair to good communication (M=28.81, SD=5.55)
Top domains: Shares Information, Communicating Accurate Information & Builds a Relationship
Lowest domains: Demonstrates Empathy, Provides Closure, Builds a Relationship
Teams varied in demonstrating empathy (due to actor performances or simulation length)
Prior experience with simulation influenced engagement

Conclusions
The simulation provided a means of teaching students about communication at EOL
Positively impacted communication
Highlights a need for healthcare education to focus on teaching appropriate empathy and provide closure in EOL situations

References available upon request; Funded by the Research Grants Committee, University of Alabama