

'Get the DNR': Exploring the Impact of an Educational eModule on Internal Medicine Residents' Attitudes and Approaches to Goals of Care Conversations

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Abstract : Introduction: Discordance between patients expressed and documented preferences at the end of life is common. Although junior trainees frequently lead goals of care (GOC) conversations, lack of training can result in poor communication. Based on a needs assessment, we developed an interactive electronic learning module (eModule) for conducting patient-centred GOC discussions. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the eModule on residents' attitudes towards GOC conversations. Methods: First-year internal medicine residents (n=11) from the University of Toronto selected using purposive sampling underwent semi-structured interviews before and after completing a GOC eModule. Interviews were anonymized, transcribed and open-coded using NVivo. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, we developed a framework to understand the attitudes of residents to GOC conversations before and after viewing the module. Results: Before the module, participants described limited training and negative emotions towards GOC conversations. Many focused on code status and procedure choices (e.g., ventilation) instead of eliciting patient-centered values. Pressure to "get the DNR" led to conflicting feelings and distress. After the module, participants' approached conversations with a greater focus on patient values and process. They felt more prepared and comfortable, recognizing the complexity of conversations and the importance of patient-centeredness. Conclusions: A novel GOC eModule allowed residents to develop a patient-centered and standardized approach to GOC conversations while improving confidence and preparedness. This resource could be an effective strategy toward attaining a critical communication competency among learners with the potential to enhance accurate GOC documentation.

Keywords : goals of care conversations, communication skills, emodule, medical education

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