



# Research Week 2021

## The Pedagogical Approach to a Novel Palliative Care Curriculum for General Surgery Trainees

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### Abstract

#### Objective

Primary palliative care (PPC) is palliative care provided at the bedside by the primary treatment team and is essential for high-quality surgical care, considering a shortage of palliative care subspecialists. There is a nationally recognized PPC clinical and research need. As part of our palliative care curriculum development, we sought to determine the optimal pedagogical approaches to teaching PPC knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

#### Design

Eight focus groups with 34 individuals were performed from February to April 2020. Interviewers used open-ended questions. The focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and de-identified. Qualitative approaches were used to encode, identify, and categorize emergent themes and sub-themes.

#### Setting

Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, Oregon

#### Participants

Surgeons, non-surgical clinicians, surgical residents, advanced practice providers, nurses, chaplains, and social workers

#### Results

Key sub-themes within the pedagogical approach theme include fundamental educational content, utilization of existing resources, structured curriculum with focus on simulation and debriefings, and practice opportunities with graduated responsibility. Numerous resources were identified as tools to acquire fundamental PPC knowledge and as supplemental resources for curriculum development. Responses included de novo creation of didactic material and utilization of existing resources.

Simulation allows for a psychologically safe place for trial and error and appropriate use of language. Interestingly, as most participants agreed that graduated responsibility and structured experiences are key to successful understanding of PPC, many providers differed on their comfort level with allowing residents to assume an active role during PPC discussions. It was also acknowledged by both residents and non-residents that residents do not always have opportunities available to develop these skills.

## Conclusions

There is a need for PPC education in surgical training to create surgeons that can provide compassionate PPC. The development and implementation of a PPC curriculum will be guided by the pedagogical approaches identified here.