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## Discussing What Matters Most: Designing a Medical Student Curriculum for End-of-Life Care

Natanya S. Russek, BS, Karrie Lu, MD, Kjersti Knox, MD, Timothy Jessick, DO

The research reported on this poster was supported by the University of Wisconsin Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) Program and Advocate Aurora Health. The investigators retained full independence in the conduct of this research.

### INTRODUCTION

- As the population ages, patients are living longer with complex illnesses.
- Future physicians of all specialties must be trained to discuss end-of-life (EOL) care with their patients.<sup>1</sup>
- Discussing EOL care issues with patients increases patient satisfaction and quality of life and reduces hospitalizations.<sup>2</sup>
- Given that communication is rated more poorly among minorities and patients with low socioeconomic status, physicians must learn to ask about how patients' background and values influence goals of care.<sup>3</sup>
- Medical students, clinical educators, and accrediting bodies (i.e. American Association of Medical Colleges, AAMC) value palliative care communication training.<sup>4</sup>
- However, medical students generally lack confidence and feel unprepared to discuss EOL care with their patients.<sup>1,4</sup>

### OBJECTIVES

- Identify areas for growth in palliative care communication training in undergraduate medical education (UME)
- Identify models which have been successful in teaching communication skills for EOL care
- Develop a curriculum to teach essential communication skills

### METHODS (Figure 1)

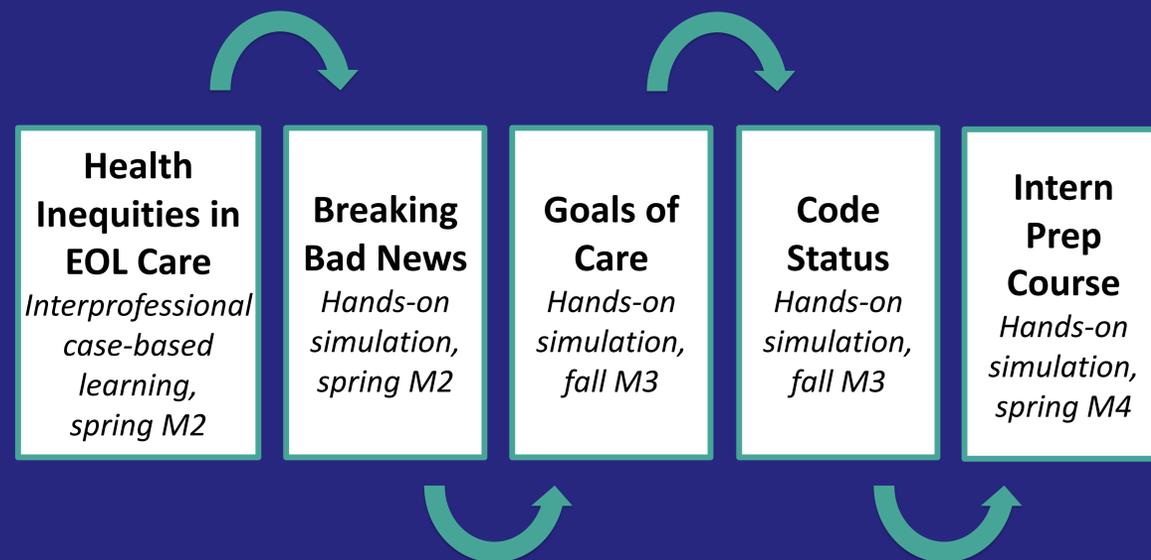
### RESULTS

- Literature review:** Students are exposed to key palliative care communication skills but lack opportunities to practice and receive feedback. Multiple teaching models are effective, and most include simulations with role playing or standardized patients.
- Student Needs Assessment:** We conducted a survey of ten graduating 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students in the Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) Program. (Figure 2).<sup>1,6,7</sup>
- Key Informant Interviews:** Clinical faculty reported that students are exposed to EOL communication skills. However, existing curricula lack structured hands-on opportunities for practice and feedback.
- We designed a hands-on, longitudinal curriculum focused on three core clinical skills.

### DISCUSSION

- Integrating hands-on practice in three clinical skills into medical student curricula is expected to positively impact quality of care provided by trainees as they pursue careers in diverse specialties.
- Pilots are ongoing, and curriculum will be implemented for graduating class of 2021.

# Implementing a longitudinal communication curriculum in palliative and end-of-life care is necessary and feasible to improve the education of and care provided by future physicians.



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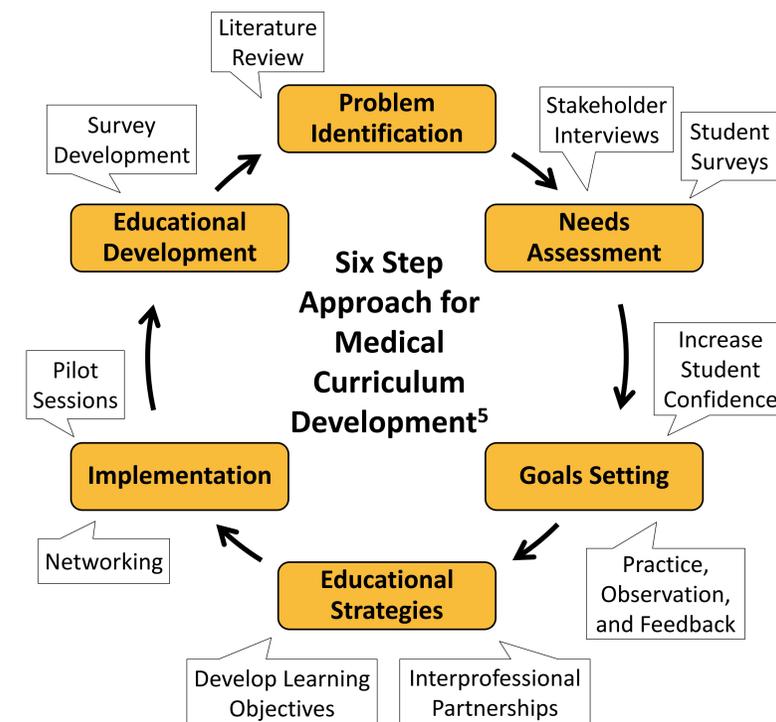


Figure 1: Approach to curriculum design.

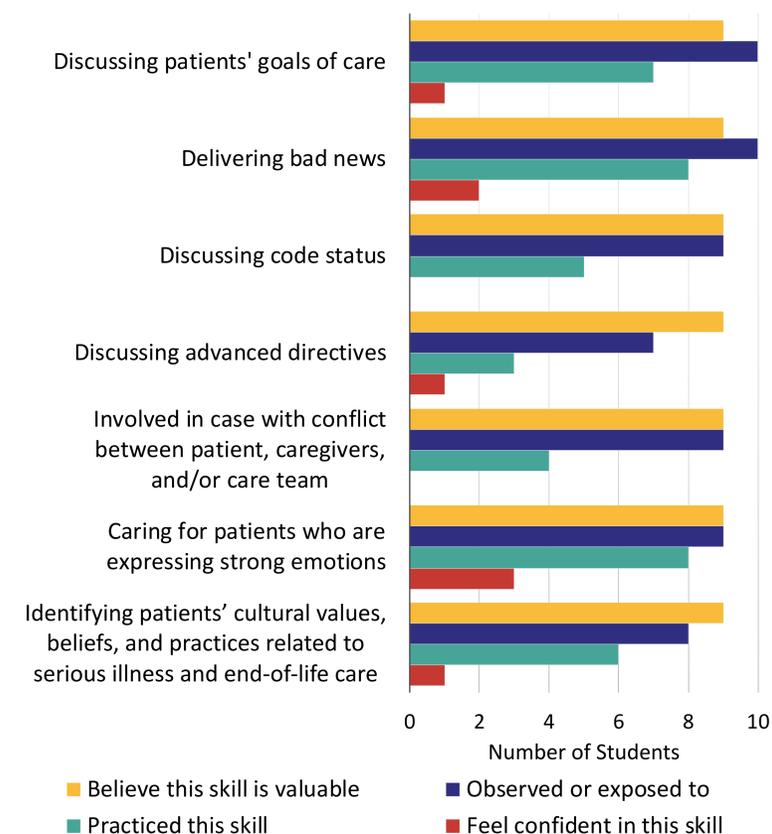


Figure 2: Needs assessment survey of 10 TRIUMPH graduates in 2018.

We would like to thank the medical students who have participated in the curriculum as well as the countless faculty and community advisors without whose contributions this work would not be possible.



**What is TRIUMPH?** Training In Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) is an educational program for University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health medical students which integrates clinical, community, personal and leadership skill development in Milwaukee, WI. TRIUMPH prepares students to become community-engaged physician leaders who will promote health equity for people living in urban health professional shortage areas.

Website: <https://www.med.wisc.edu/education/md-program/triumph/>