Teaching Health Care Professionals How to Respond to Requests for Assisted Dying

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Why this program is needed?

- A request for PAD may be very challenging (personal, ethical and legal implications)
- Cases before the Supreme Court of Canada
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Why this program is needed?

• Health care professionals may be reluctant to discuss the request
  ✓ Because they feel unprepared, anxious, upset...
  ✓ Or they may respond abruptly unaware of personal biases
  ✓ Or may be unaware of their role & professional ethics
Why this program is needed?

• The request indicates that the patient is suffering and needs to be listened to
  ✓ What is the suffering behind the request?

• HCPs should feel capable of listening and talking compassionately irrespective of own personal views
What this program is about

• Understanding the legal and ethical issues of PAD

• To provide HCPs with the knowledge and skills to respond to patient requests for PAD

• Acknowledging the patient’s suffering in a constructive and empathic way
What this program is NOT about

• It does not support complying with a PAD request
How does the program work

• An interprofessional program 2-4 hours
  ✓ Multiple audiences in multiple settings

• Teachers (ethicists, HCPs) will have
  ✓ a curriculum
  ✓ tools (cases, role plays and power point slides)
  ✓ a teachers’ manual

• Learners receive curriculum copy
Curriculum for teachers

- Introductory explanation
- Clarifying the language
- Why would patients request PAD
- Current legal status of PAD
- Public and physician perspectives
- Ethical concerns
- Palliative care and Quality End of Life
- A six step approach to respond to PAD requests
A six step approach to respond*

1. Clarify the request
2. Assess the underlying causes
3. Affirm your commitment to care for the patient
4. Address the root causes of the request considering each dimension of suffering: physical, psychological, social, spiritual or existential

* Adapted with permission from the EPEC Project, Northwestern University
A six step approach to respond

5. Respond to persistent requests and discuss alternative decisions that are legal and ethical

6. Consult with colleagues and other members of the team
Dissemination

• Included as a resource on website
  ✓ Registration needed for evaluation purposes

• Endorsation to be sought from other organizations e.g. Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association