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# **'DINING WITH DEATH' – CONVERSATION MENUS AS A MEANS OF EDUCATING PEOPLE ABOUT DEATH, DYING AND BEREAVEMENT**

Rebecca Patterson, Mark Hazelwood. *Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care, Edinburgh, UK*

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There is growing consensus that palliative care encompasses a 'health promoting' element concerned with encouraging openness about death in society so that people are aware of ways to live and support each other with death, dying and bereavement. A general societal reluctance to engage with these issues makes it harder for clinicians to initiate timely discussions with patients about their end of life care wishes.

However, finding ways to educate wider society in issues relating to death and dying can be problematic in a culture where raising these issues is variously perceived as too morbid, too difficult or too sensitive to mention.

This poster describes the *Dining with Death* menu and some of the settings in which it has been used, exploring its potential as an experiential learning tool to enable people to become more open about discussing death and dying.

The *Dining with Death* conversation menu is a folded piece of A4 card, printed with three 'courses' of suggested conversation topics, for example 'Cremation or burial?'; and 'What would be in your death plan?'.

The menu was first used November 2011, with 60 individuals from various organisations, who had been invited to a restaurant lunch to mark the launch of *Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief*. Since then, *Dining with Death* has been used to facilitate discussions at education events for health professionals and two 'death cafes' at *Just Festival*.

These events indicate the menu has potential as a learning tool: it can be used flexibly, across different types of events and different audiences; it overcomes barriers to engagement in death discussions by intriguing participants and engaging them in non-threatening conversations through which they can learn from their own and others' experience. There is potential for further evaluation and development of the *Dining with Death* menu in the future.