Volunteers were confident about their communication skills, with all question items (bar one) having initial mean scores of $>= 4.38$. Their responses showed least confidence in their ability to answer 'difficult' questions (mean score 3.94). Although all scores improved post-training, none showed statistical significance.

Volunteers were confident in their abilities to support families (baseline mean score 4.31). For all other support skills, post-training all question items showed statistically significant improvements. Except for spiritual support, confidence levels were sustained at 3 months.

Free-text comments supported the value of the training programme for their work with dying patients and their families.

Conclusions With careful selection process, a short training programme covering pertinent end-of-life care issues is effective in providing volunteers end-of-life care knowledge and skills.

P 187

'BEING WITH YOU'. EVALUATION OF A NOVEL 'VOLUNTEER COMPANIONSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME' FOR SUPPORTING END-OF-LIFE CARE WITHIN AN ACUTE HOSPITAL SETTING

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Background Although the value of hospice volunteers is widely recognised, their role within the hospital setting is less established. An end-of-life volunteer companionship programme was established within an UK hospital to help support dying patients and their families (provision of 'sitting' service and psychological support).

Aim To assess the effectiveness of a two-day volunteer training programme.

Methods Fifteen hospital volunteers were recruited due to length and experience of service; a further two through personal expressions of interest. A questionnaire (assessing knowledge, confidence about communication and support skills) was given: pre-training; 2 weeks post-training; and 3 months post-training. Each question (n=17) had 5-point Likert-scale response options (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Free text response boxes were provided.

Two further cohorts of volunteers have been recruited (total n=30) and additional results are forth-coming.

Results From the initial 17 volunteers, 14 were female with ages ranging from 19–70 years. Statistically significant improvements were seen across all knowledge scores post-training and were sustained after 3 months.