LIFE OR DEATH DECISIONS: ONLINE ENGAGEMENT USING FILM TO EXPLORE ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

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Background Within the UK, despite policy drives to increase the rates of Advance Care Planning (ACP), it is not widely used by the general public and there are many misconceptions around ACP. The Open University has a commitment to providing free educational resources drawing on its research expertise via OpenLearn. Life or Death Decisions is an online educational interactive created at The Open University to introduce the general public to ACP. It uses a bespoke film about a woman who has a sudden medical emergency to lead students through breaking bad news consultations and DNAR discussions; facilitated with a simulated patient actor.

The course was evaluated using an anonymised questionnaire which incorporated qualitative and quantitative elements. Ten point visual analogue scales were used to measure the students’ perception of the event. Analysis of the results after 4 groups had completed the teaching led to an adaptation of the training to incorporate additional scenarios and smaller group work. This was re-evaluated using the same questionnaire.

Results All but 2 students (4%) felt the training was appropriate early in their clinical studies. Overall they felt the event was very beneficial with a mean visual analogue score (VAS) of 9.1. The benefit of participating in a scenario was improved following modification of the course (mean VAS 9.5 vs 8.8) but the benefit of observing the scenarios was similar in both groups. Review of the qualitative themes suggested that modification of the course provided benefits of greater student participation and peer feedback.

Conclusions Previous studies suggest that students might not gain sufficient experience of difficult conversations. This study shows the benefits of simulation in providing experiential training early in the clinical course. It also demonstrates the need for continuous evaluation of teaching to ensure that learning objectives are maintained.