**Abstracts**

**Communications and Documentation After Death: Introduction of Medical Examiner**

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**Background** St Oswald’s Hospice strives to ensure high standards of communication and documentation after death, in line with Hospice UK’s Care after Death guidance, to support bereaved relatives, meet legal requirements and for coronial processes. From April 2023 it will be statutory law that all non-coronial deaths must be reviewed by a medical examiner (ME). The ME role was integrated into our practice from September 2022. This audit aimed to assess our communication and documentation prior to ME introduction and as the role was established.

**Methods** 100 patients who died in the inpatient unit prior to ME and 19 patients after initial introduction of ME role had documentation reviewed with a standard of 100% in recording:
- Cause of death as stated on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and discussion with family
- Whether the patient was for burial or cremation
- External health professionals notified of the death
- Details of any discussion with the Coroner’s office or ME and subsequent explanation to the family

**Results** (Pre ME and post ME/amending documentation):
- Cause of death as stated on the MCCD was recorded in medical notes in 97% and 100% respectively.
- Burial or cremation was documented in 84% and 89%.
- 100% of GPs were notified of patients’ deaths.
- Prior to ME 25% of deaths were discussed with Coroner of which 40% had details documented. Post ME 37% of deaths were discussed with Coroner and 63% with ME, 53% of those had details of discussion with family documented overall.
- Documentation of discussions with family regarding content of MCCD was present in 15% and 53% respectively.

**Conclusion** Introduction of ME and amending documentation templates following initial audit has led to an improvement in communication and documentation after death. Further improvement and re-audit continues.

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**NARRATIVES OF COVID: LOSS, DYING, DEATH AND GRIEF DURING COVID-19**

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**Introduction** The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people’s personal and professional lives, with many people experiencing various forms of loss including bereavement. The Open University (OU) is a large organisation with many students and staff impacted by the pandemic. The Open Thanatology group at the university noted a gap within the institution to collectively understand and support each other during this time. We sought to provide a space within the OU where students, staff and alumni could share stories and experiences of loss during the first year of the pandemic through narrative writing.

**Methods** People were invited to submit a narrative of up to 1,500 words to the editors by early March 2021. The editors worked with authors to refine each contribution and self-published the collection in September 2021.

**Results** Over 30 authors contributed with a range of materials from personal essays, reflections on frontline work or research, and poetry. Topics included: loss during COVID-19; impossible choices and restricted presence during COVID-19; death and dying during the pandemic; death as a result of COVID-19; grief, loss and funerals during COVID-19; other experiences of grief during COVID-19. Contributors commented that the process was therapeutic and that it recognised and honoured their experiences. For some it was their first-time publishing. It captures a ‘moment in time’ and the difficulties people faced.

**Conclusion** Publishing the Narratives of Covid book has been a useful way of bringing people together within the Open University and connecting with and sharing people’s experiences of death, loss and grief during the pandemic. Subsequent events at libraries have broadened the conversations beyond the university. Since the book is available as a free download, it has been used in education, research, reading groups, and public engagement.