

SSC1 B11: Decisions around CPR

Time for a shock: An investigation into the views and understanding of CPR amongst the multi-disciplinary team

Reflective Essay - 400 words

Recent media controversy regarding high profile court cases highlights that end of life care is a complex and sensitive area of medicine, and is poorly understood among laypersons. As a group, we felt it would be useful to understand the issues surrounding CPR to prepare ourselves for clinical practice, where we may encounter such difficulties. By speaking with patients, we also had opportunities to develop our communication skills. We realise patients and families should be involved in making end of life decisions alongside healthcare professionals. Therefore we sought to explore the differences in views among these groups that might lead to communication difficulties.

A questionnaire was completed online by 240 doctors, nurses and medical students and on paper by 72. Patients were interviewed directly by face-to-face consultation at RIE by paired group members. Results of different groups were analysed and compared. Differences existed in knowledge surrounding the facts of survival rates of patients receiving CPR. The survival rates estimated by nurses and patients contrasted largely with doctors and current research. There were also differing opinions around situations in which CPR should be withheld. The majority of patients were found to have formed opinions on the basis of television in contrast to doctors, nurses and medical students, who drew on education and personal experience.

Some group members struggled with patients who did not understand the aim of the study. One patient was concerned his answers might influence his healthcare. Clarity about the purpose of the questionnaire may have prevented this. As a group, we developed our knowledge of CPR and DNACPR through reading around the subject, and meeting with an intensive care consultant who showed us the after-effects of CPR on patients through a tour around ICU. We initially found it difficult to conduct this project alongside our other studies. Due to this, we learnt to make the time that we spent as a group more productive.

For future projects, it would be useful to target patients in an environment where the topic of CPR is less threatening, e.g. in a GP surgery. We could also contact and liaise with other professionals working in similar areas of research e.g. Dr Senaratne who is conducting a study of ideas around CPR in Oxfordshire. With more powerful data, we might influence government schemes, e.g. guidelines for the media to help portray a more realistic view of CPR.