

Notes from Open Space Topic Convenors

What was your topic or practice?

Relationship-based care at the end of life and increasing family participation during the vigiling process.

What were major discussion points?

Social “grass-roots” approaches that emphasize death as a natural part of life could facilitate a decrease in the fear associated with the process itself. The necessity of viewing death as a sacred process that represents potential for growth and development vs. “nothing more to do” can enhance perception and encourage appropriate medical interventions and patient empowerment through offering of choice. Emphasizing family involvement in the vigiling process as an opportunity to expand their awareness and realize a positive death experience could facilitate continuation of family support when aggressive treatment measures are no longer an option. Creating rituals that will provide healing and support during life’s crises are of significance in establishing healing models at the end of life. The importance of providing complementary modalities in addition to traditional measures of symptom management assist people in “living with something vs. dying from something.” Approaching relationships in a non-judgmental way is an essential component in therapeutic interventions in all phases of life and particularly so at the end of life to allow families to approach relationships in a way that supports their process.

What did you learn?

Patients die in many settings. Although hospice may be the ideal place for many, others may require the support of other institutions. Programs such as “No One Dies Alone” help to address a basic need of the dying in the hospital setting. Death viewed as a psychosocial spiritual process vs. primarily physical in nature can increase how we accompany patients at the end of life and will help us, as Dame Cicely Saunders said, “Become familiar with depth and apprentices to soul.”

Whom should we contact for more information?

Name: Mike and Deb Girard, Compassionate Models for End-of-Life Care
Address: Circle of Life Hospice
1575 Delucchi Lane, Suite 214
Reno, NV 89502
Phone: 775-824-3888
Email: deb@colhospice.com and/or mike@colhospice.com

Name: Sandra Clarke, No One Dies Alone

Address: Sacred Heart Medical Center

PO Box 10950

Eugene, OR 97440

Phone: 541-686-2868

Email: saclarke@peacehealth.org

Who helped create this new practice?

Wonderfully committed, highly intelligent, compassionate, and articulate individuals whose names were not recorded, but you all know who you are.