

BACKGROUND

- Death, dying, and end-of-life care can be important topics for pharmacists.
- Studies have shown 70-80% of pharmacy schools offer end-of-life care education which is much lower compared to nursing and medical schools (>95%).
- It's important to look into pharmacy students' perceptions of death and dying to learn if pharmacy schools are properly preparing students to handle death and end-of-life care.

OBJECTIVE

- To assess pharmacy students' perceptions about death and dying and their preparedness for dealing with these situations after graduation to help determine the importance of death education in pharmacy schools.

METHODS

Study Design

- Retrospective qualitative study

Study Population

- Third year pharmacy students enrolled in the Critical Care elective at SIUE School of Pharmacy

Data Source

- Student reflections from 2016, 2018, and 2019

Qualitative Analysis

- Thematic analysis
- Content analysis to illustrate the prevalence of the themes

RESULTS

Table 1:

Theme	Example Quotes
Taboo Topic	"I think the hard part is breaking down that barrier and making death a topic that isn't taboo; it's a part of life and shouldn't be shied away from."
	"Death over dinner proved that death can be talked about in a light-hearted and practical manner, which can benefit all involved."
Inspired to continue the conversation	"Since starting this class, I have already opened the door to talking with my family about what they would want in the end and plan to encourage patients to do the same."
	"I feel I have a better idea of how to appropriately discuss end-of-life plans with patients."
New concept	"This class has really been the first time in the curriculum that death and dying was a major topic of discussion."
	"We are not really prepared for any of this in our regular curriculum, and I think it should be incorporated for everyone."
Healthcare system flaws	"Our healthcare system is not well equipped to provide effective end-of-life care but only the prolongation of life."
	"I always thought that as a HCP I have to treat the condition and cure the patient. However, after the end of life discussion during this course, I realized that cure is not always the goal of therapy."
Patient choice	"As a practicing pharmacist, I plan to do my best to give my patients options and support their informed decision regarding their end of life... I want to be able to provide my patients with information and options about their end of life, and most importantly expressing that they do have choices."

RESULTS

Table 2:

Theme	2016 (N=10)	2018 (N=18)	2019 (N=17)	Total (N=45)
Death isn't talked about much and should be	90%	77.78%	47.06%	68.89%
This class inspired students to have conversations with their families and can help with patients in the future	70%	88.89%	76.47%	80%
Death and dying isn't covered much in the curriculum besides this elective	60%	61.11%	64.71%	62.22%
The healthcare system handles death poorly	30%	55.56%	35.29%	42.22%
End-of-life care should be the patient's choice	40%	33.33%	41.18%	37.78%

LIMITATIONS

- Only one researcher conducting the analysis
- Potential bias with the nature of qualitative research
- Self-selection bias from students choosing the critical care elective
- Only assessed students from one pharmacy school

CONCLUSION

- Students reflected that death education was valuable to their professional development and found it important to be included in required curriculum for all pharmacy students
- Further investigation into the type of death/end-of-life care education that is most effective for pharmacy students is warranted