

Abstract

Background: Death, dying, and end-of-life care can be important topics for healthcare professionals, including pharmacists. Several studies have evaluated the prevalence and type of death and dying education at pharmacy schools across the nation. It's also important to better understand if pharmacy students feel properly prepared to handle death and end-of-life care in practice.

Objective: To assess pharmacy students' perceptions about death and dying education and their preparedness for dealing with these situations after graduation.

Methods: Student reflections about death and dying, that were written in the Critical Care elective offered at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) School of Pharmacy, were evaluated using thematic qualitative analysis. The data was retrospectively collected from 3 years of the course offering.

Results: Of the 45 reflections analyzed, five themes were identified: death isn't talked about much and should be (*taboo topic*), the class inspired students to have conversations with their families and can help with patients in the future (*inspired to continue the conversation*), death and dying isn't covered much in the curriculum besides this elective (*new concept*), the healthcare system handles death poorly (*healthcare system flaws*), and end-of-life care should be the patient's choice (*patient choice*). The first three themes were more common and were found in over 60% of student reflections, and themes 4 and 5 were in around 40%.

Conclusions: Overall, the pharmacy students felt that death and end-of-life care isn't talked about enough in pharmacy school. For many, it was the first time they thought about it and realized that the topic wasn't covered elsewhere in the curriculum. Students reflected that the death education was valuable to their professional development and found it important to be included in required curriculum for all pharmacy students.