Continuing Connections with Bereaved Family Members: Post-Mortem Experiences From the 3 Wishes Project

Melissa Shears, HBSc, MD Candidate 2019
mshears@qmed.ca

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The 3 Wishes Project

Bringing a set of 3 wishes to fulfillment in the hope of bringing peace to the final days or hours of a patient’s life

3 Specific Objectives

• For patients, to dignify their death and celebrate their life
• For family members, to humanize the dying process and create positive memories
• For ICU clinicians, to foster patient and family-centered care and inspire a deeper sense of our vocation
Post-Mortem Experiences

Objectives: To describe the elements and impact of the postmortem components of the 3WP after 100 patients

Methods:
• Interviews of 86 family members, 50 clinicians (100% participation)
• Family interviews
  – in-person (n=53, 61.6%)
  – phone (n=31, 36.0%)
  – email (n=2, 2.3%)
• Analyzed using conventional content analysis
# The Wishes: 1/3 Post Mortem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanizing the Environment</th>
<th>Tributes</th>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>Rituals</th>
<th>Paying it Forward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movie night</td>
<td>Final toast</td>
<td>Finding a lost relative</td>
<td>Firework display</td>
<td>Hospital volunteer position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using a patient’s nickname</td>
<td>Word Cloud</td>
<td>Skype reunion</td>
<td>Renewal of wedding vows</td>
<td>Family donations to 3W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal keepsakes in the room</td>
<td>Tea party</td>
<td>Pet visitation</td>
<td>Smudge ceremony</td>
<td>Contribution to charity of importance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Favourite flowers</td>
<td>Birthday cake</td>
<td>Hosting final supper</td>
<td>Wedding</td>
<td>Organ donation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results: Connections

Structured
- 3W sympathy cards to families
- Wish elicitation +/- implementation
- Family & clinician interviews
- Memorial service for families

Unstructured
- Letters from family members
- Family visits, calls, emails, photos
- 3W team reflective notes
Results

• The 3 Wishes Project facilitated family re-engagement with ICU, hospital and project staff, through structured components of the project, and also through unstructured postmortem communications and visits.

• Connections have been scheduled or spontaneous.

• While some family members found it difficult being back in the hospital, all described the return as a meaningful experience during their grieving process.
Conclusions

- **Continued connections** with family members of deceased patients enrolled in the 3 Wishes Project appear to be valued
  - Whether formal or informal
  - With or without therapeutic intent
  - Supported by clinicians & the community
  - Welcomed by family members in grief