

Caring For Our Team While Honoring Our Patients

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Team Wellness

"These are a good way to remember our lost patients and grieve with co-workers; very therapeutic."

Project Description

Two to three times a year our palliative care team coordinates a memorial service for the palliative care and oncology teams. The service provides our staff the opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on losses, focus on team care and participate in an interactive art project honoring the patients we lost.

Examples of memorial services:

- In the fall of 2015, devotion was led by a our palliative care chaplain around Leo Buscaglia's book *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*. A team member painted a picture of a tree with branches. As patient's names were read, team members reminisced about their patient. Then members placed fingerprints along the branches to represent their connection to the patient. A beautiful tree full of multi-colored leaves was displayed within the Cancer Center.
- In the summer of 2016, a volunteer chaplain provided "Blessing of Hands" with readings, ceremonial washing of team member's hands and anointing of oil. The same team member painted a picture of a meadow. After patient reflection, team members stamped flowers and butterflies to represent each patient. This created a beautiful, uplifting piece of art for staff and families to enjoy.



Summary

Satisfaction surveys were completed by the team members following each memorial service. The services have been well received, earning 5 out of 5 on all survey questions.



Based on feedback, we will extend invitations to our colleagues in hospice, medical floors, and ICU as they too care for our patients and experience similar loss.



"Much needed for myself and my co workers. I do feel other nurses that care for some of these patients on nursing units may benefit as well."



Heidi Leinart, certified oncology nurse, painted the memorial service artworks.



Introduction

Schneck Medical Center is a rural, 93-bed non-profit hospital in Seymour, Indiana. The outpatient palliative care clinic is embedded in the cancer center. The care teams develop strong relationships with patients and their families during treatment. We identified increasing distress due to multiple losses and limited opportunity to grieve.

Literature¹ recommends development of positive health care behaviors and coping strategies to prevent burnout that can occur as a result of chronic exposure to stressors and ineffective coping resources. Our palliative team developed a two-fold service to provide care to our team members along with honoring the patients we have lost.



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"I enjoyed the memorial service. It helps me deal with the loss of my patients and pay respects to their passing. I think it is very beneficial to staff to have this opportunity."

"Wonderful opportunity to laugh, cry and honor both our patients and our care we give; love reminiscing."

¹ Kravits, Kate, et al. "Self-care strategies for nurses: A psycho-educational intervention for stress reduction and the prevention of burnout" *Applied Nursing Research*, Volume 23, Issue 3, August 2010, Pages 130-138