

## Purpose

No One Dies Alone (NODA) is an interprofessional, student-operated hospital volunteering organization.

- **The NODA mission** is to provide compassionate companionship for patients at Jefferson hospitals who would otherwise be alone during their final moments of life.
- In addition to the patient, we provide our service for the nurses, friends, and family members who find comfort in knowing that their patient or loved one is not alone.

## Background

The first NODA program was established by Sandra Clarke, CCRN in 2001 at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene, Oregon

- A patient of Sandra's was dying and had asked for her to stay with him. She returned from her duties to her other patients to find that he had passed alone. From this experience, Sandra fostered a standard that no patient in the hospital should die alone.
- Sandra's mission has spread globally.
  - Lehigh Valley Hospital, PA; John's Hopkins Medicine, MD; Eskenaki Health, IN; Assisi Hospice, Singapore

## NODA at Jefferson

- Launched in 2016 as the first student-operated and sustained NODA program
- NODA officially became a Jefferson student organization in January 2017
- NODA serves patients at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and Jefferson Hospital for Neuroscience
- Volunteers welcomed from all Jefferson health professional programs



## Methods

### Initiation of the Program

- Kathryn McGrath, MD established the first NODA presence on campus as an interprofessional leadership committee.
- Committee task forces begin to implement our vision for the NODA program at Jefferson:
  - Volunteer Trainer: Patrick Kukulich, SKMC 2019
  - Coordinator: Hannah DeCleene, JCP 2019
  - Debriefing sessions: Daniel Levine, SKMC 2018

### Volunteer training

- Overview of the dying process, program logistics, and preparation for acute situational challenges.
- Communicate values of service integrity, communication, and respectful bedside presence.

### Activations

- Nurses recognize when a patient or patient's family may require our presence, and will page NODA. We refer to this request, along with its associated communication, as an 'activation.'
- An activation alert is sent to volunteers.
- Volunteers sign up at self-appointed shift times and lengths.
- At the bedside, we offer our supportive presence by reading books, poetry, playing music, and/or simply sitting with the patient in respectful silence.



	Day 1 08:00-14:00	Day 1 14:00-20:00	Day 2 08:00-14:00	Day 2 14:00-20:00
Volunteer Name				

Figure 1. Example of an activation Sign-Up Sheet

### Debriefing sessions

- Held within 24-48 hours of an activation completion (patient passing, transfer to hospice).
- Facilitated by a NODA executive board member with the following intentions:
  - Promote emotional support via informal discussion of bedside experiences.
  - Foster personal and professional reflections on death, broadly and specifically as it relates to our future roles as healthcare professionals.

## Results

August 2016 – March 2018:

- Membership has grown from 17 to 90 volunteers
- NODA has served at the bedside of **38 patients**
- Individual volunteer time at the bedside has decreased and overall coverage has increased per NODA activation.
  - A continued administrative goal is to provide more coverage per patient with less strain on individual student volunteers.

Volunteers reflect on their experiences with NODA at Jefferson:

*My medical education can feel like crippling and self-serving tunnel vision. Volunteering with NODA offers the opportunity to be present, humbled, and connected to the human spirit.*

*I proudly say: NODA has helped sculpt me into the nurse I am today.*

*We are not just made equal, but also brought together by this unavoidable consequence of life... In the end, death awaits us all, and as such we become a unified human spirit who are all in need of the same love. All that matters is that we are all entitled to strength, support, and care at the end of our lives. When a patient's family or friends are not available to provide that, NODA is here, judgment-free and without bias.*

## Conclusion

- NODA provides a compassionate companion service appreciated by patients' families and nursing staff, while offering early and meaningful patient care experiences for students.
- NODA is a worthy program to establish in any academic institution with access to motivated student volunteers and a hospital.

## Acknowledgements

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