

Abstract

Original Article

## The Impact of Pediatric Palliative Care Training on the Death Attitudes of Health Professionals

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**Abstract**

**Background:** It is increasingly recognised that comprehensive training in pediatric palliative care cannot be achieved only through the acquisition of knowledge and skills but requires the cultivation of self awareness and acknowledgment of personal attitudes to death and dying.

**Aim of the study:** This study aimed to explore the impact of a pediatric palliative care training program on the death attitudes of a multidisciplinary team of health professionals.

**Methodology:** A sample of 83 health professionals (nurses, physicians, psychologists and others) participated in a quasi-experimental study. Participants in the intervention group (IG) (N=34) attended a 150-hour training program on pediatric palliative care, whereas the control group (CG) (N=49) received no training. All participants completed a questionnaire on demographics and the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) before (T1) and after (T2) the training program. A repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to identify any main or two-way interaction effects on the DAP-R subscale scores. **Results:** A two-way interaction was found in the Escape Acceptance subscale, with both groups having similar scores at T1, whereas at T2 the IG showed higher scores compared to the CG. A group difference was evident in the Neutral Acceptance subscale, with the IG showing higher scores than the CG at both T1 and T2. Moreover, time difference was found in this subscale, with scores at T2 being higher than at T1 for both groups. No statistical significant effects were detected for the other DAP-R subscales.

**Conclusions:** Pediatric palliative care training influenced trainees' death attitudes. Results indicated that confrontation with children's incurable illness and unavoidable death may generate mixed attitudes to death. Further research is needed to explore the process by which changes in death attitudes occur over time. Implications on designing and assessing the impact of pediatric palliative care educational programs are also discussed.

**Keywords:** pediatric palliative care, training, death attitudes, healthcare professionals