

## ATTITUDES OF PRE CLINICAL MEDICAL STUDENTS TOWARDS CARING FOR DYING PATIENTS - DOES PALLIATIVE CARE TEACHING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Mari Lloyd – Williams, Nisha Dogra, Leicestershire Hospice,  
Groby Road, Leicester UK LE3 9QE

### **Introduction**

Students entering medical school encounter many patients with terminal and life limiting disease. This study was carried out to determine the attitudes of pre clinical medical students towards the care of patients for whom a cure is not possible, prior and immediately post formal teaching on the subject.

### **Method**

All students were invited to complete a 23 item likert scale pre and post teaching.

### **Results**

One hundred and fifty one of the 186 students (79%) completed the questionnaires (males=59; females 90) (median age 20 years; range 19 – 27). Female students were significantly more likely to believe that most cancer patients have pain that could not be adequately relieved compared to male students ( $p=0.18$ ). When comparing age with attitudes older students had a more positive view of caring for patients with terminal illness ( $p=0.001$ ), a more positive view of listening to patients reminisce ( $p=0.009$ ) and a more positive view of patients dying at home ( $p=0.014$ ). Post palliative care teaching, students had a significantly more positive view of hospices ( $p=0.004$ ).

### **Discussion**

Caring for patients at the end of life can be one of the most rewarding aspects of being a doctor. Age has an influence on students attitudes towards such patients. As more mature students enter medicine, this may lead to a more positive widespread approach to palliative care.