

## **TITLE: Self-Awareness**

### **Topic: 4**

#### **What is the importance of self-awareness in palliative care?**

As human beings, we all have a set of personal values and beliefs, which govern our attitudes and behaviors. These values and beliefs are an integral part of who we are. There are times when our beliefs and values are not the same as the patients and families that we care for. It is important that we recognize and develop self-awareness in order to provide patient focused care that is supportive and open to other points of view.

Self-awareness takes into consideration:

- Our experience and history working with dying patients
- Our professional roles and responsibilities (duty to care, boundaries)
- Our biases, stereotypes, assumptions and “blind spots”

How do we become self-aware:

- Take stock when we encounter situations that provoke a response that is not congruent with the person we are caring for.
- Reflect on past responses and behaviors both positive and negative.
- Talk with our peers and learn from others.
- Recognize our own biases.
- Look beyond the illness or behavior to see the person.
- Approach care with kindness in a non-judgmental way.

Self-awareness helps us to recognize our feelings and attitudes which can enable us to put these aside and to focus on the needs of the patient and family.

The ABCD's of Dignity Conserving Care (Chochinov 2007)

- Personhood, respect, humanity and kindness

**Attitude** –Our attitudes and assumptions are developed and can influence the way we see and care for a patient.

**Behavior**- Our actions should reflect; respect, kindness and acknowledgement of the patient as a person.

**Compassion**-The ability to recognize and respond to the suffering of another person.

**Dialogue**- Communication with a focus on personhood.

“Through a genuine examination of attitudes that shape patient care, a change in behavior that draws from these insights, and the awakening of compassion, many fundamental aims of dignity conserving care will already have been achieved.” (Chochinov, [BMJ](#). 2007 Jul 28; 335(7612): 184–187. doi: [10.1136/bmj.39244.650926.47](#)PMCID: PMC1934489)