The Healing Power of Hope: For Patients and Palliative Care Clinicians (SA518)

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Objectives

- Distinguish between hope and hopelessness and false hope and false hopelessness, generate a list of attributes regarding domains of hope and hopelessness, and review the research on hope and how maintaining hope has important, positive clinical outcomes.
- Differentiate hope as a process with key communication facilitators versus hope as outcome.
- Discuss innovative strategies that foster hope, meaning, and resilience for palliative care clinicians in navigating challenging work situations and cumulative stresses in providing hopeful palliative care.

Hospice and palliative medicine clinicians struggle with maintaining hope in the face of life-threatening illnesses. Poor prognosis often highlights the dilemma of maintaining hope in the face of challenging illnesses with limited or no options for curative care. When hope is dependent on a specific health outcome, options may indeed be limited and hopeless. But if hope can be reframed as a dynamic process, then a patient has the potential to see hope and possibility even in the face of dying. Recent studies have demonstrated that the biology of belief and maintenance of hope have positive results for the patient by improving physical, emotional, and spiritual symptom management. Hope may also have positive effects for the clinician. How can we foster authentic hope and not false hope or hopelessness in our communications with patients and families? This session will explore the dimensions of hope, hopelessness, false hope, false hopelessness, and miracles and how they affect the care we provide for our patients. Inspiring hope in ourselves as clinicians also has a healing effect on us and can help prevent burnout and increase resilience to the stressors inherent in working with situations that are challenging. Techniques to foster hope in patients and ourselves will be explored including brief self-reflective exercises, mindfulness in practice, appreciative inquiry, writing, collage, and other narrative and debriefing methods. A brief reflective exercise will be included in the session with sharing in small groups.