

# Exposure to death and dying can have a positive impact

December 6 2010

---

Exposure to death and dying does not negatively affect palliative and hospice care professionals and can actually have positive benefits, states an article in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

A study of palliative and [hospice care](#) professionals in five centres across Canada over was conducted to explore how death affects their personal lives and practices. Since these professionals are constantly around death and dying, it was thought that their insight could benefit others.

Participants reported that being around dying people has allowed them to have a better understanding of the meaning of life, has helped them become more spiritual and has helped them come to terms with their own mortality.

"Participants reported that their work provided a unique opportunity for them to discover meaning in life through the lessons of their patients, and an opportunity to incorporate these teachings in their own lives," writes Shane Sinclair, Spiritual Care Services, Tom Baker Cancer Centre, Calgary, Alberta, and CIHR Postdoctoral Fellowship with the Manitoba [Palliative Care](#) Research Unit, University of Manitoba.

"Although Western society has been described as a death-denying culture, the participants felt that their frequent exposure to [death](#) and dying was largely positive, fostering meaning in the present and curiosity about the continuity of life."

"Participants attested to the weighty nature of their vocation, but this was far outweighed by the many affirming life lessons that participants

incorporated into their own lives and practices," concludes Sinclair. "Although the end of life is arguably the most challenging phase of life, it may also be the most meaningful, providing hope to those who are living with an incurable illness as well as individuals who will inevitably face their mortality in the future."

In a related commentary Dr. Pamela McGrath, International Program of Psycho-Social Health Research, Central Queensland University, Brisbane, Australia writes that the important message to learn from Dr. Sinclair's research is that "with support and the opportunity to incorporate the experiences into personal and professional lives, doctors can find caring for the dying meaningful and professionally satisfying. This message challenges widely held misconceptions about the inherently morbid and negative nature of the health professionals' experience of caring for the dying."

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

Citation: Exposure to death and dying can have a positive impact (2010, December 6) retrieved 2 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-12-exposure-death-dying-positive-impact.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--