**NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘Responding to the Sudden Death of a Doctor in Training - Case Study: Associate Dean’ Film**

As an Associate Dean and a Consultant, I’ve experienced the sudden death of a trainee. He was a friend and a colleague as well as a trainee, and in a small department, we all had very close working relationships, and we're a close-knit team. In fact, I’d, I’d go as far as to say that we're a kind and caring community. The trainee had been on sick absence for a while with some health problems, but had returned to work, and I was very much supporting him in the workplace.

Yeah we had a, we had a close trainer-trainee relationship, and he knew that if he wanted to contact me at any stage, that was okay. I had an open door policy for all my trainees.

His psychiatrist suggested he should refer himself to the GMC for his health issues, and that triggered a very difficult experience for him. Including worrying emails, and attendance at meetings, which he just found really, really challenging.

On the day died, he didn't arrive for work, and wasn't answering phone calls or texts. As a colleague had a family member’s number, we called them. And as they couldn't contact him either, they went to his house and found him dead. It was really awful for them, and the family. I can remember the feeling of shock. We all knew about his struggles, and we wanted to be there for him, but we felt we’d let him down somehow. Reflecting now, I, I don't think we had let him down, but at the time that's how we all felt.

We all attended his funeral. It was so important for us to acknowledge his existence. He’d done such important work, and made such a big difference to so many people. He supported us all with his kind friendship, and he was a brilliant teacher, as well as a mentor to other trainees. We all wanted to do something to remember him. So, we decided to raise money for charities that were close to his heart in memory of him. I think, looking back, it was difficult for him to talk about his struggles. He was perhaps embarrassed or scared to talk about it, and I didn't press him, because I didn't wanna put him under pressure.

Perhaps I could have asked more questions, I'm not sure about that. I think he knew he was cared for and valued. Afterwards, the team recognised how this affected them, by coming together to talk about how they could support, and respond to this situation differently. Perhaps by providing information, and to support, to those who may be struggling sooner, rather than later.

We are a community who cares for each other. We know we can't make everyone better, but we just felt so, so guilty. I’ve reflected on what I could have done differently, and as a team we've considered how we could provide some form of guidance to support colleagues in how to respond and cope with the sadness, by ensuring that we are as sensitive and as kind as possible.

The film was produced in May 2022 and can be found at [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or <https://vimeo.com/711652379>

For more information visit [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or contact [supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk)

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