**NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘Perspective of a GP Practice Manager Experiencing Bereavement in the Workplace’ Film**

I work as a practice manager in a busy GP practice. One day I received an alarming text message

from the husband of Jean, one of our GPs, to say that she was in hospital after suffering a cardiac problem. I immediately started thinking, how is this going to impact the individuals of the practice team and how are we going to maintain a service? I contacted the other GPs, and we made the decision to let the team know something was wrong, but we weren't 100% sure of the facts, we didn't want to scare people. We managed to maintain the service, with the expectation that we wouldn't know something for a day or so. And then we received the message from Jean's husband to say that she had passed away. Suddenly there's a lot of stuff that's changed here.

It's a challenging thing in life where you have plans and ideas and processes and procedures

all in place that relate to an event, or situation, or an individual, and that's taken away from you,

you suddenly have to realign those things. And that is not a comfortable place for a human being, or for a business. So, I got the GPs together and we had a quick conference call to support each other and just to make sense of what had happened. And we made a brief plan of how we were going to get through this, and we made the decision to close the practice and tell the team. We got all the team together in one area, and by that time people knew something was wrong, and we broke the news.

It was hard, keeping it together for myself whilst supporting them.

The following day we reopened for patients, and we helped the reception staff by letting them know that if they were struggling just to take the details of the patients and end the call. But, in the main, most patients were very understanding.

The next afternoon we held a get together and we closed the practice for two hours. We invited friends and colleagues and people who knew Jean on a personal side. I put a photo of her on the table and it just gave us some time to relay the fact of what had happened and just for people to process the news. And as a team we shared how much Jean meant to us and told stories of interactions we'd had, and some people stayed for a couple of hours; others drifted or had other commitments to go to. In a strange way, it brought us more closer together.

I stayed in contact with Jean's family, just to let them know how much she meant to us and how much she meant to our patients. We also put some flowers on the desk for a couple of months and some information on the practice website. We also sent text messages to the patients to let them know where to find it. We still get people who're unaware of what happened, wanting an appointment with Jean and... that’s hard. That's hard for the team at times.

I trained as an educational facilitator and one of the courses is resilience. I contacted my tutor and asked for help, just to get a bit perspective; and that, that really helped me. We talked about how we could support the team and we done the supporting in-house. I thought it'd be strange for people to talk to strangers about something so personal. That brought the team together. But there are people that prefer external support so maybe that's something that we should have provided.

As time goes on, the upset feels less. I remember Jean's desire to make things better, her ethos. Her, the direction she wanted the practice to go in and I use that as strength. I'm going to continue this journey and I'm going to champion her values, almost in a sort of legacy to her. You want to feel better. You want to feel capable that you can do the job you did before. But you can't rush the hours in a day. Sometimes you just have to let the days and weeks play out before you can feel better.

The film was produced in October 2023 and can be found at [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or <https://vimeo.com/906401999>.

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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