**NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘Perspective of a Consultant Experiencing Bereavement in the Workplace’ Film**

I was the consultant on duty when I heard that one of my colleagues, who'd been critically unwell, had unexpectedly died. I was shocked and devastated by the loss of her. She was, she was like the glue of our department, someone that was liked and loved by everyone. She was very well known across the hospital, and so the reverberations of her death would seem vast, I was sure.

However, firstly I had to consider how to tell the others in the department, I mean, if we would need organisational help, or if the chaplain would come in to help us, which they did. We asked all the staff on duty to gather in one room; they knew something significant had happened, so even at that stage it was not easy to contain any speculation or wonderings. I mean, we all knew our colleague was very unwell, but we thought they could recover. So there was a high level of suspicion that the news was about them. I remember someone coming into the room, and then tearfully going back out again, they couldn't be in that room if there was going to be bad news.

We are a busy and demanding department, and so we had to think about providing cover for the department, so that people could process the news, and, more importantly, grieve. We managed to get a locum consultant, and other doctors volunteered to help us from across other boards. We were overwhelmed by their kindness and generosity. These were very difficult days for us, as we were in the midst of a pandemic, so everyone was very busy and still they offered to help us. It was astonishing, and evidence of our humanity in these moments is always humbling.

One of our chaplains came in to see us frequently, in fact he seemed to always be there whenever I needed him. I, I knew what to do to support people, but sometimes I just couldn't remember what to actually do. Our chaplain helped me through those moments. He offered space and time for reflection

for all the staff throughout the shifts. And at handover he offered us some thoughts on what we might feel in the coming days. It was really key to have our chaplain be there, and be visible with staff at those moments.

We started thinking about how we might all attend the funeral, and that it was so important for everyone who wanted to attend they are able to be there. We felt that was therapeutic, and once again our colleagues from our community supported us to make that happen. They phoned everyone they knew seeking help, and once again we felt the support network envelope us.

As the weeks and the months rolled on we continued to have days of feeling blindsided by our grief. The unexpectedness of our vulnerability sometimes took our breath away. We were all dealing with grief in different ways, and sometimes it can be too painful. It took us almost a year to memorialise our colleague and friend, because we were in too much pain to do it earlier. We've been able to reflect that we were, and sometimes are, experiencing collective grief. We are able to recognise that it might always be there for us and that sometimes the waves of grief that we feel are like a tsunami hitting us.

However, in all of this devastation we realized how important our connections to one another are. And that the humanity and love of our colleagues across our community of practice is a very precious and exceptional thing.

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/906402885>.

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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