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# Assessing the impact of supplementary training on the spiritual conversations between employees and patients at hospice

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We developed and implemented a research based supplementary educational course for hospice staff at two Danish hospices. 85 staff-members participated.

The aim of this project is to assess the impact and experience of the educational course, focusing on whether the health professionals at the hospice experience themselves becoming better equipped to care for the patients' spiritual and existential needs, as well as assessing the impact and applicability of the difference aspects of the educational course.

## Background

Patients at the end of life don't experience their existential and spiritual needs being sufficiently met by health care professionals (1). Research show that this lack is caused by the inadequate knowledge and education of health care professionals on the subject, a lacking understanding of the existential needs of patients as well as professional shyness in the face of spiritual and existential conversations (2-5).

## Participants

All employees from Arresødal Hospice and Hospice Sydlyn were invited to participate in the educational theme days and 85 individuals attended. Of these, 57 individuals answered the evaluative post-course questionnaire. Additionally, 13 individuals participated in follow-up interviews 2 weeks following the course.



## Method

In order to evaluate the educational course, we performed post-course focus group interviews, individual interviews and asked the participants to answer an anonymous evaluation questionnaire containing both quantitative and qualitative metrics.

## Results

The preliminary results from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data indicate that the participants found the content of the educational course to be useful and relevant for their everyday work in hospice in terms of spiritual care and communicating with patients.

## Conclusion

A supplementary educational course for hospice staff with focus on existential self-reflection, the vulnerable encounter and developing shared professional language for spiritual care can make hospice staff better equipped to care for patients' spiritual and existential needs.

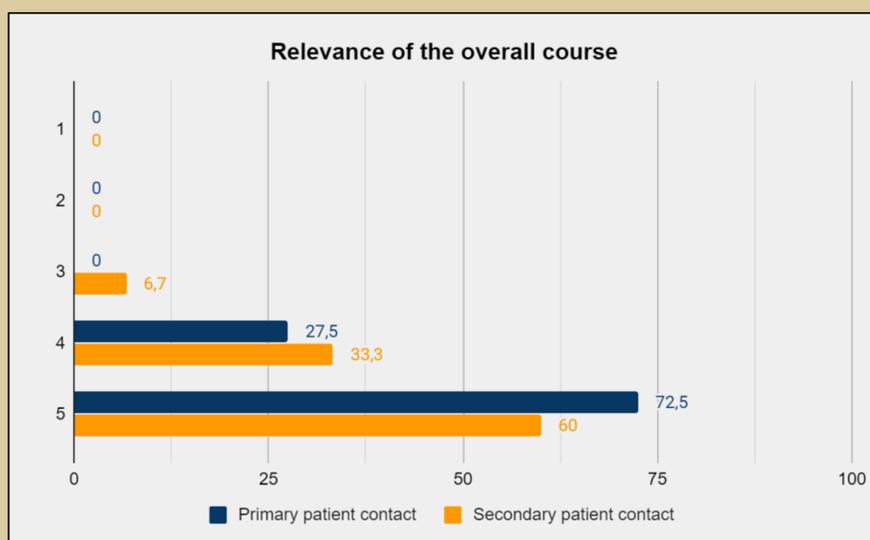


**Table 1.** Age and professional characteristics of participants answering the evaluative post-course questionnaire

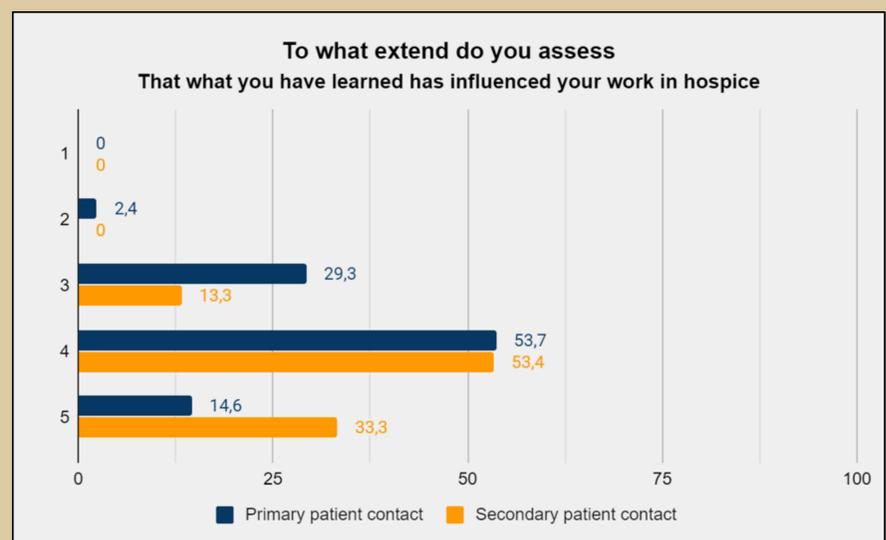
Baseline characteristics	
Number of participants answering the evaluative questionnaire, N (%)	57
<b>Arresødal Hospice</b>	
Mean age, years	30 (100)
Primary patient contact, N (%)	23 (79,3)
Secondary patient contact, N (%)	6 (20,7)
<b>Hospice Sydlyn</b>	
Mean age, years	27 (100)
Primary patient contact, N (%)	18 (66,7)
Secondary patient contact, N (%)	9 (33,3)

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**Figure 1.** Self-reported relevance of the overall course stated in percent of participants per answer.



**Figure 2.** Self-reported effect of the educational course on the everyday work in hospice stated in percent of participants per answer.