Key Takeaways: Caring Through Interpersonal Conflict
April 6, 2023

Key points:
- **What is Stigma:** The negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency. A stigma implies social disapproval and can lead unfairly to discrimination against and exclusion of the individual.
- **Impact of Stigma in EOL Care:** Stigma in EOL Care can have a negative impact on patients, providers, and in policy through unfair treatment, pay inequities, and fewer educational opportunities, just to name a few. Stigma can also negatively affect the emotional, mental, and physical health of stigmatized groups and the communities they live in.
- **Importance of Removing the Stigma:** Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger toward ordinary people instead of focusing on the issue that is causing the problem. Removing stigma can lead to improved quality of care, build trust between the patient and provider, and demonstrate that you respect the patient and their values,

Actionable Steps:

- Educate yourselves and others (self-awareness)
- Communicate and be conscious of language.
- Show compassion and empathy.
- Develop a consistent response/action plan.
- Communicate your commitment to supporting a healthy and psychologically safe workplace.
- Train organization leaders so they are empowered to respond promptly and appropriately.
- Correct negative language that can cause stigma by sharing accurate information.
- Be inclusive in organizational decision-making.
- Consider organizational policies related to responding to bias, including information and expectations that are shared with patients and families up on admission.

Conversation Starters:

- What should be considered related to patient care?
- How can the leadership team support the employee being discriminated against?
- What formal policies should be in place to address discrimination at the bedside (whether directed towards patient/employee)?
- On the flip side, what if there is hesitation to care for patients based on their neighborhood? How should that be addressed?

Participant Perspectives:

- "Every employee, no matter who they are, what they look like, and who they love, wants to feel valued."
- "Protecting our employees doesn't always mean policy, sometimes it means asking 'What do we need to do to help you feel safe?'"
- "The discussion of the provider's experience in a supportive, open discussion needs to happen."
- "Our organization recently developed and implemented a policy on Responding to Biased Provider Requests. All staff are trained and educated, and the expectations are in our patient and family handbook."
- It's important for employees who have been discriminated against to feel supported and know that their employer values them just as much, if not more, than the patient or family who has discriminated against them.

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