

Educational Forum

MORTALITY MEETING: A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PLATFORM

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Introduction: Mortality meetings are conferences that are held in hospitals, especially at academic medical institutions at regular intervals. The ultimate goal of the mortality meeting is to identify and avoid issues and events that occur during patient care and eventually decrease mortality and better the patient care. In academic hospitals they also serve as tool to teach the life skills to the students. The students not just follow the case and acquire medical knowledge, but also get to see how the senior doctors harmoniously dissect a case and bring about balanced discussion to pinpoint the chances of error in regular patient care.^{1,2}

Benefits of mortality meeting

- a. Improvement of quality of patient care
- b. Decreased complications and decreased mortality rate
- c. It helps in identifying areas of improvement
- d. Brings about changes in practices in hospital
- e. As a tool of learning

Though many hospitals conduct mortality meetings, there is a lack of consensus regarding various aspects of how to conduct a meeting to make it more effective. Usual events of mortality meeting include discussion of issues that occurred during the care of patients, resulting in a complication or death. However a badly arranged meeting can ruin the whole purpose. Hence basic knowledge about how to conduct a mortality meeting is essential.^{2,3}

How to conduct a mortality meeting?²⁻⁶

- a. Appointment of dedicated personnel for overseeing the mortality meeting activities, coordinating between the departments and attendance issues goes a long way in the

success of the meeting. It is the responsibility of those concerned staff to prepare a structured document about various aspects of meeting. The document contains the below details

- i. Chairing the meeting and team behaviour
- ii. Statement about who selects and reviews the cases for discussion
- iii. Statement about what is the basis of case selection
- iv. A format for keeping the discussion focussed on important issues
- v. Appropriate record keeping of the outcome of mortality meeting

The order of events of a mortality meeting is as below.

Points to be considered before conducting mortality meetings

- a. The agenda should be distributed prior to the meeting so that the staff can familiarise with the case and problems before the meeting
- b. Purpose of the meeting along with location should be clearly communicated.
- c. Case selection: attempt should be made to involve people from multiple disciplines so that as many staff as possible can be benefitted from the discussions.
- d. Informing all the concerned staff well in advance helps in improving the staff attendance.

Points to be considered while the meeting is on

- a. Discussions should be focussed, relevant, patient centred. Open and constructive discussions should be encouraged.
- b. The meeting should follow a structured format. Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation (SBAR) model is a useful format.
- c. Presentation should progress in standardised model so that attendees can focus on learning points and minimise distractions. Proper time limit for presentation helps to keep the audience.
- d. The focus should be on the events rather than individuals. This helps in proper identification of error mechanisms and their mitigating those risk mechanisms.
- e. Making a provision for a safe and mutually respectful environment rather than blaming individuals.
- f. Chairman of the meeting should steer the discussion in proper direction so as to benefit the attendees. Any disagreement between participants should be managed so as to facilitate smooth progress of the meeting.

Points to be considered after the meeting

- a. A proper recording the recommendations and conclusions of the meeting and circulation of these minutes of meeting to all the concerned for communication of the proceedings.
- b. Chairman or the hospital head should assign a dedicated team/authority for implementation of recommendations and follow up and also time-limit for the same.
- c. It is recommended to include only summary of the interactions and recommendations, in the minutes of meeting section to promote open discussion.

How mortality meetings can be improved further⁷⁻¹⁰

- a. Along with mortality, morbidities also can be included so as to improve the overall care of the patient. Such meetings are also referred to as clinical review meetings or mortality and morbidity review meetings.

- b. Along with discussion of mortality and morbidity, a discussion on near misses during care helps in further minimizing risks.
- c. Room for improvement for administrative factors may also be considered.
- d. A review of the literature relating to the case may be considered for learning of the junior doctors.
- e. Preparation of summaries of the events helps the junior doctors in effective learning and in preparedness in the event of litigation.

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