Background

COVID-19 has led to isolation, impersonal family discussions, and traumatic patient deaths impacting resident experiences.

Residents have been working longer, more stressful hours with a loss of meaningful outlets due to limitations in social gathering.

No formalized training on structured debriefing after adverse clinical events exists in our program.

We developed a peer-led virtual debrief training workshop to upper-level internal medicine residents.

Methods

Structured pocket card was adapted from literature to guide residents through key steps of an effective debriefing session.

Pre-intervention needs assessment: measured debriefing practices, individual emotional wellbeing, residency’s culture.

Zoom© 60-minute Workshop: Resident peers introduced the concepts and virtues of effective debriefing sessions.

Participants recalled a recent clinical experience they felt would have benefitted from debriefing.

Practiced debriefing in virtual breakout rooms, using the pocket card.

We concluded the session with a large group discussion.

Post-intervention survey data
1. Understanding of the importance of debriefing
2. Ability to recognize situations that could benefit from debriefing
3. Knowledge of the general steps to initiate a debriefing conversation
4. Comfort in leading a debrief
5. Familiarity with resources for ongoing support.

Pre- and post-intervention survey data were analyzed using a 2-sample t-test for statistical significance.

Results

Significantly more residents felt comfortable leading a debrief session compared to prior (80.4% vs. 43.8%, p<0.001)

Participants’ Feedback

"Incredibly cathartic and helpful... We honestly felt we were debriefing for ourselves... it helped normalize many of the emotions that we experience on wards... Helping senior residents feel comfortable instigating and leading debrief discussions will help everyone on the team."

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic increased residents’ personal and professional stress and their feelings of isolation. Our training dramatically increased residents’ recognition of the importance of debriefing and their ability and comfort in leading these sessions and demonstrated the efficacy of virtual breakout rooms in delivering this workshop.

Next Steps

Promote sustainability of debriefing culture by significantly increasing the number of debrief sessions annually, consequentially improving personal wellbeing, resilience, and performance at and outside of work.