



# Holding Space: The use of virtual breakout rooms for an adverse clinical event debriefing workshop for Internal Medicine residents

Joanne Chiao, MD MHA, Marissa Martin, MD, McHale Anderson, MD, Roxana Naderi, MD, and Adrienne Mann, MD

University of Colorado Hospital-Department of Internal Medicine



Division of General Internal Medicine  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

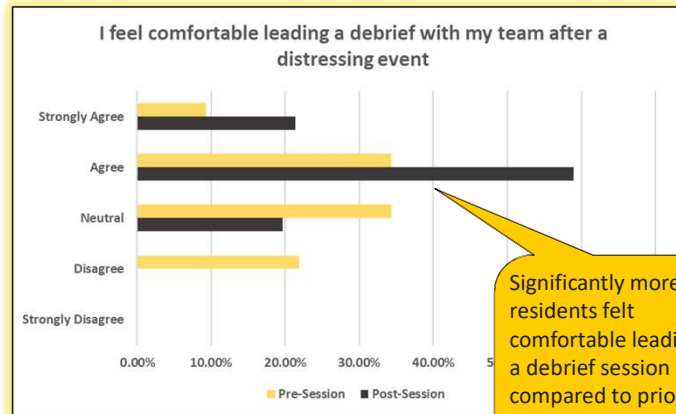
## Background

- 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.

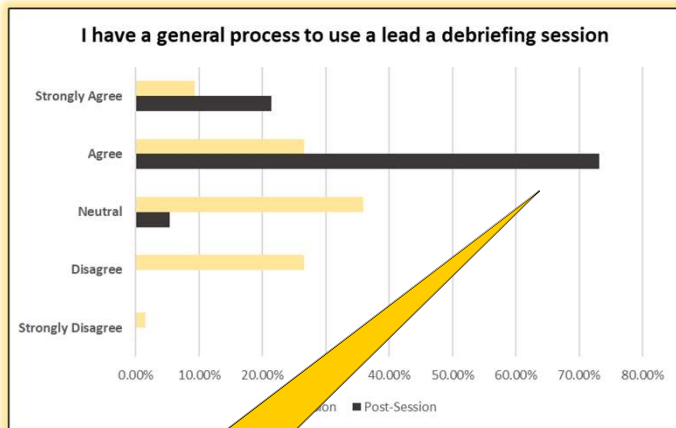
## Methods

- Structured pocket card was adapted from literature to guide residents through key steps of an effective debriefing session.<sup>1</sup>
- 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)



Significantly more residents had a process by which to lead a debrief session compared to prior (94.64% vs. 34.94%, p<0.001)

### References

1. Keene EA, et al. Bereavement debriefing sessions: An intervention to support healthcare professionals in managing their grief after the death of a patient. *Pediatr Nurs* 2010; 36:185-189.
2. McDermott A, Brook I, Benisaac E. Peer-debriefing after distressing patient care events: a workshop for pediatric residents. *MedEdPORTAL*. 2017;13:10624. [https://doi.org/10.15766/mep\\_2374-8265.10624](https://doi.org/10.15766/mep_2374-8265.10624)
3. Nishmi Gunasingam, Kharis Burns, James Edwards, Michael Dinh, Merrilyn Walton. *Reducing stress and burnout in junior doctors: the impact of debriefing sessions*. *Postgrad Med J* 2015;91:182-187. doi:10.1136/postgradmedj-2014-132847

## Pocket Card

Component	Suggested Framework
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate facilitator</li> <li>• Introduce participants (name, role)</li> <li>• Establish goals of debrief, time constraints</li> <li>• Establish ground rules on confidentiality, culture of psychological safety</li> </ul>
<b>Setting the Stage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the patient? (one liner with clinical presentation)</li> <li>• What is their story? (brief summary of difficult situation)</li> <li>• Why is it important to debrief this situation?</li> </ul>
<b>Team Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What went well in this situation?</li> <li>• What surprised you in this situation?</li> <li>• What do you wish had gone differently in this situation?</li> <li>• What was the most difficult part of this situation for you personally?</li> <li>• What thoughts/feelings/reactions have come up for you since this situation occurred?</li> <li>• How do you think this situation might affect you in the future?</li> <li>• In cases of Covid-19 patients, in what ways did that diagnosis affect the situation? (patient care, provider interactions, family communication, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you encountered a situation similar to this one in the future, would you do anything differently?</li> <li>• If you would, what do you need to do or learn in order to prepare for that?</li> <li>• What do you need in order to effectively move forward from this situation?</li> <li>• How can the team best support each other going forward?</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator summarizes key take-aways by recognizing the emotions, wins, and struggles brought forth by the team</li> <li>• Facilitator concludes session by 1) offering a plan for follow up discussion and/or 2) providing resources for the team to seek out continued support</li> </ul>

## 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.