

Echoes of Compassion: Empowering Medical Students in the Face of Loss

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Background

- Medical students experience death and trauma in their clinical roles
- Without adequate support and preparation, these experiences can lead to burnout, reduced empathy, and lapses in compassion¹

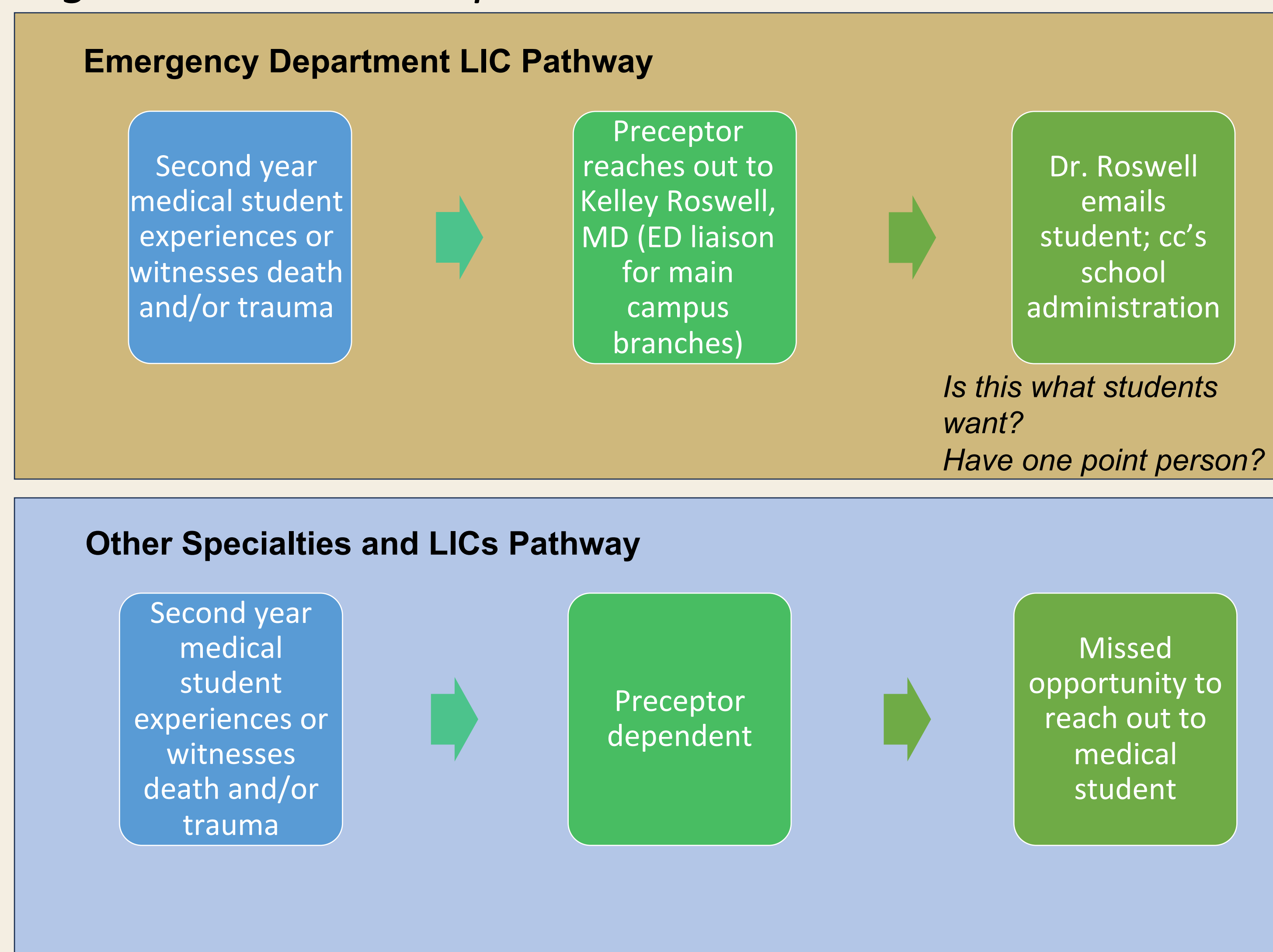
Objectives

- Evaluate and understand the current level of support available to medical students dealing with death and traumatic experiences during clinical rotations
- Formulate a system to support students' who experience patient death in the clinical space

Methodology

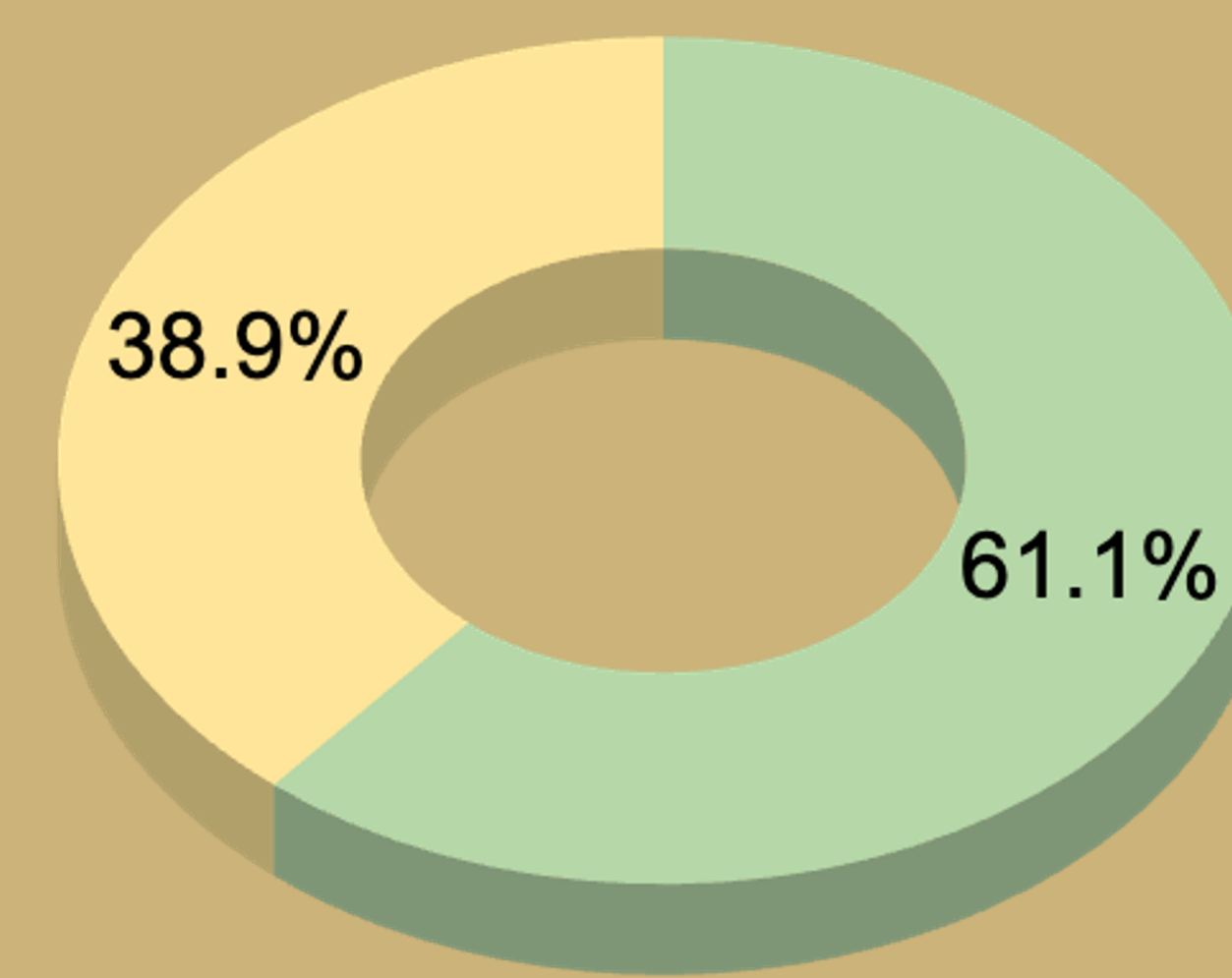
- Create a process map of currently existing system at the University of Colorado School of Medicine
- Conduct a qualitative survey among N=18 members of the Class of 2025 from various clinical cohorts

Figure 1. Process Map



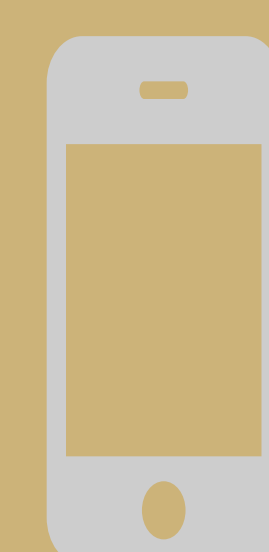
Entity: Second year medical students in clinical year
Engage: Students, preceptors, LIC directors, liaisons, OS� deans

Did anyone reach out to you about your patient death experience?



● No ● Yes

“I think it was helpful to have someone reach out... it could be helpful to have a system in place by which preceptors always notify someone if a death/difficult situation occurs with a student involved.”



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Results

- 61% of students reported no outreach regarding their experiences, while of those who reported outreach, 100% found it helpful
- Qualitative themes identified include the importance of peer support, debriefing, and broader support networks in processing death experiences

Outcomes

- Updated existing survey and evaluation process to allow preceptors to notify administration of students who experience patient death and to gather additional information about students’ experiences

Discussion

- Key takeaway from the survey and process mapping of a bereavement support program is the identification of an existing inconsistency in the current processes in the SOM curriculum
- Updated evaluations will provide an opportunity for students to disclose their experiences and for preceptors to be aware of any potential trauma or emotional challenges that students may be facing

Next Steps

- Review evaluation data to further assess gaps in the current curriculum
- Continue to develop a system to support students by creating an end of year survey for all classes to improve sample size

References

1. Wiemann B, Ketteler E, Fahy B. Surgeon and medical student response to patient death. *Ann Palliat Med.* 2023 Jan;12(1):70-80. doi: 10.21037/apm-22-885. Epub 2022 Dec 27. PMID: 36627848.