Online Course engages ageing Australians in open discussions about death and dying.

Lauren Miller-Lewis, Jennifer Tieman, Deb Rawlings, Deborah Parker & Christine Sanderson.
CareSearch:

• Free website providing access to evidence-based information on palliative care.
• Sections for Nurses, GPs, Allied Health, Aged Care & for patients/carers.
• PROBLEM: dying & palliative care are the ‘elephant in the room’. SOLUTION?...

MOOCs:

• Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) - new technology with potential to reach people throughout Australia & worldwide.
• MOOCs = freely available short online courses; flexible learning via internet.
• Innovative technology for educational interaction & knowledge exchange.
• CareSearch harnessed this opportunity by developing a MOOC, Dying2Learn.
• Aimed to facilitate social discussion about death, dying & palliative care, & build community death awareness.
Methods:
• Designed on OpenLearning platform & made freely available to the public
• 5-week course with educational content, reflection activities & peer interaction
• Collected demographic data at enrolment & Pre+Post assessment of death attitudes
• General evaluation & MOOC engagement metrics extracted from platform
• Mixed-methods data analysis

Results:
• Participants: 4718 people enrolled in Dying2Learn in last 3 years; 50,000 comments
• 2017 cohort = 1960 enrolees (majority Australian)
  ➢ Average age 47 years, range from 17 to 82 years
  ➢ 17% participants aged over 60
  ➢ Older participants made significantly more progress through the course
  ➢ Full completion of the course was highest in the 60+ age group

Flinders University Social & Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project 7247)
“The course gave me exactly what I needed – a greater inner awareness and increased confidence to talk more openly about death and dying.”

“Participating in Dying2Learn was uplifting and inspiring as I shared stories. The more we talk about something we fear, the less we fear it.”

97% OF OUR PARTICIPANTS enjoyed Dying2Learn

96% OF OUR PARTICIPANTS felt comfortable talking about dying and death by the end of Dying2Learn

Conclusions

- A MOOC was a viable strategy for stimulating community discussion about death.
- Dying2Learn MOOC platform was:
  - well-utilised by people varying in age, with very active participation by over 60s.
  - helped participants feel more comfortable discussing death.
- Highlights the potential of these innovative online learning platforms for increasing community awareness of death, dying & palliative care.
- Age was no barrier to participation.
- The interactive online course appealed to and benefitted older & younger participants alike.
- Potential positive implications for aged care.

Miller-Lewis et al. (2018); Rawlings et al. (2017); Tieman et al. (2018).